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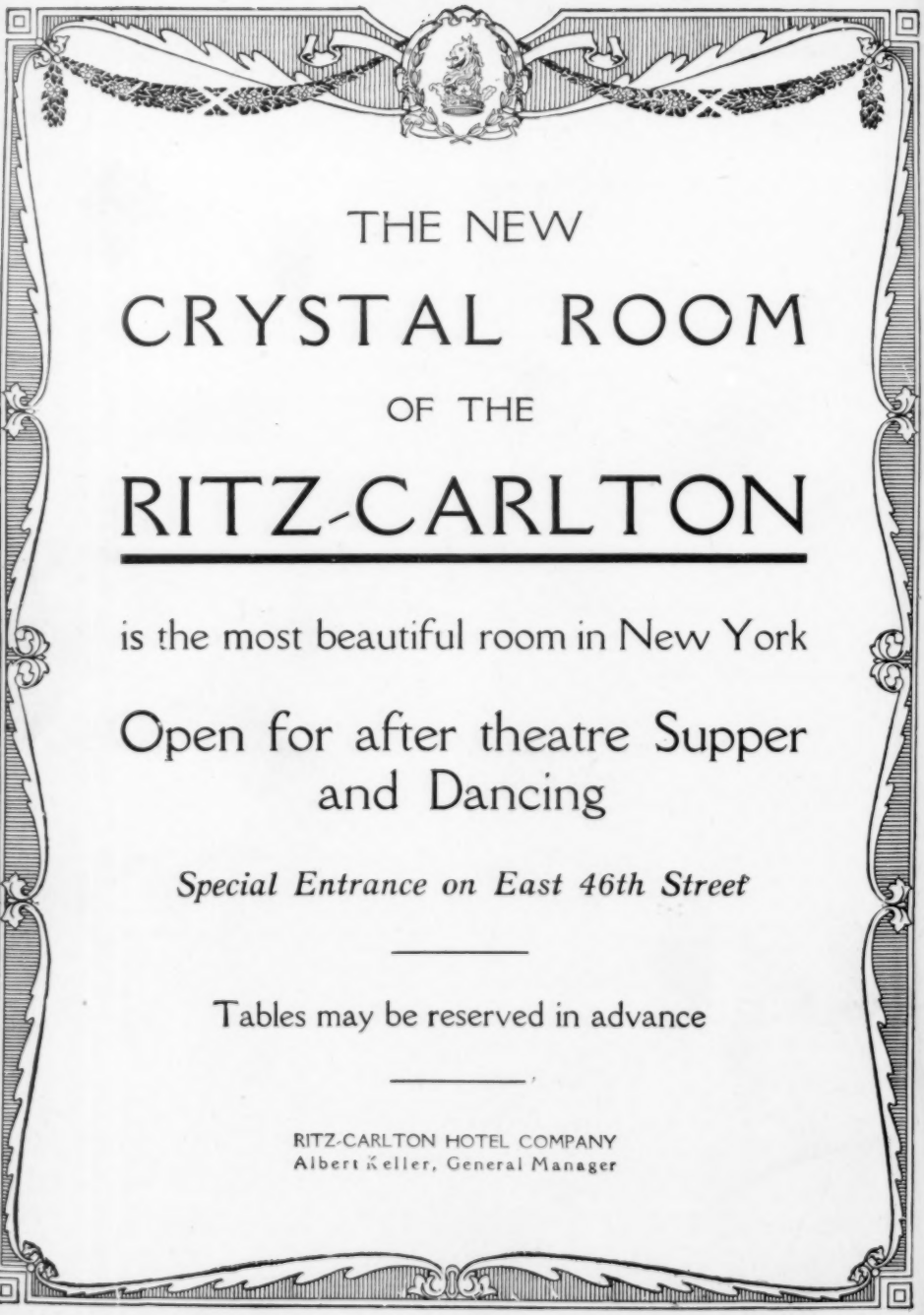

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Vol. LIII DECEMBER, 1917 No. 4

The SMART SET

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AND

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Vol. LIII DECEMBER, 1917 No. 4

The SMART SET

A Magazine for the Bon Vivant

GHOSTS

By Henry Hugh Hunt

THE man had learned that his was a fatal illness. Eminent physicians had, in consultation, pronounced their verdict. His recovery was impossible. He was about to die—alone. Childless, and thrice widowed, there was no gentle feminine hand to soothe his last hours.

As he lay in the canopied bed, with the night-light turned so low that the lofty room seemed full of ghostly shadows, a tear of self-pity crept down his pallid cheek. . . .

But, gradually, his fevered eyes discerned a misty figure at the foot of his bed, and he heard the faintly whispered words: "I am waiting for you, Dear."

And he knew that it was the spirit of his first wife, calling to him from across the Border.

He trembled, but, as he looked, the figure melted away into the gloom; only to be replaced, a moment later, with the shadowy semblance of his second wife. "Dear, I am waiting for you," he heard again.

He moaned, and closed his eyes; but the insistent whisper: "Come, dear, I am waiting for you," made him look once more, and he saw the shade of his third wife beckoning to him with a spectral finger. . . .

The man's rapid recovery is considered by the eminent physicians as nothing short of marvelous.

SEVERAL SKETCHES IN SARCASM

By George Jean Nathan

I

Temperament

THE rage of the *artiste* knew no bounds. That she should be thus annoyed just before her appearance in the great scene! She stamped about her dressing-room; she threw her arms heavenward; she brushed the vase of roses from her table; she slapped her maid for venturing at such a moment to speak to her; she sank exhausted into an armchair, a bottle of salts pressed to her nostril.

It was full fifteen minutes before she recovered.

Then she went out upon the stage and began her famous interpretation of the great scene in which she chloroforms the detective, breaks open the safe, shoots the policeman who attempts to handcuff her, smashes the glass in the window with the piano stool and makes her get-away by sliding down the railing of the fire-escape.

II

Maxim

THE young man, sitting at the feet of a philosopher, noticed a cynic smile tugging at the silence of the philosopher's lips.

"I was thinking," observed, with an alas, presently the philosopher, "that one is always a woman's second lover."

III

The Savant

THERE lived in Bœotia a lout who was even more empty-headed than his most empty-headed neighbour and who yet, throughout the domain, was looked on as a shrewd and wise and sapient fellow.

Whenever anyone spoke to him of a thing he did not understand, he vouchsafed no reply, but merely smiled a bit, and winked.

IV

The Public Taste

A NUMBER of jackasses were sent to pasture in a meadow that was all green grass and dandelions and buttercups and daisies. At the far end of the meadow was a large billboard upon which was pasted the flaming lithograph of a moving picture actor standing on his head on the top of an upright piano. The jackasses, immediately they entered the meadow, made a bee line for the billboard and began omnivorously to pasture off the lithograph.

V

Respect

THE mistress of the man on trial for bigamy was in tears.

"What is it, dear?" the man asked of her, tenderly.

The woman's frame shook under her sobs. "You don't respect me," she wailed. "Because if you did, you'd marry me."

THE FITZ-HERBERT TRADITION

By Lillian Foster Barrett

I

THE Shepherds came from Philadelphia, and acted accordingly. So did other people, for Quaker blue blood is ever recognized and receives an homage out of proportion to the worth of what it has to offer. The Shepherds had to offer nothing but themselves. Their appearance in Newport for the summer was all the more remarkable for this fact. People wondered, but rushed to leave cards to show their admiration for such supreme confidence in the capacity of unaided lineage to carry the campaign.

The Shepherds were not climbers. The meager little cottage in Catherine street in which they had installed themselves was convincing; it so frankly confessed to a limited income. There was, obviously, to be no struggle to keep up appearances, no false show to lure the public into a belief in some financial windfall. Newport showed its appreciation of this modesty of attitude and becoming pride in proportion to its novelty in the community.

"I wanted one summer more in Newport," explained Mr. Shepherd as he bent low over the hand of Mrs. Anthony Prescott, who had been the first on the scene of action.

Mr. Shepherd's voice had a peculiar musical timbre that made of the most trifling banality a delicate innuendo.

Mrs. Prescott started nervously and then faltered with the faintest of blushes, "Then you haven't—forgotten?"

Mr. Shepherd in no way showed his surprise at having aroused the unexpected. "Forgotten?" he murmured in a tone in which reproach struggled with yearning for mastery. He pressed the fingers lying in his, sighed and turned away. Mrs. Shepherd took possession of Mrs. Prescott at that point, so Mr. Shepherd was allowed a few minutes respite. He withdrew to a bay window and studied the situation and the lady.

Mrs. Prescott was smoothly forty. She had been a Fitz-Herbert and by dint of that fact had "swung" Society for many years. She was not a decided personality, but had the remarkable trait of controlling people of far stronger intellect than herself by a very contradiction of values. Women distrusted her, but were obliged to propitiate, for she could make or mar any reputation at will. One purr of her depthless voice could achieve a complete ostracism. She craved the society of men but lacked the courage of her convictions and always fell back upon her virtue with a fine show of outraged feeling. She had never had a lover in the true sense of the word. Perhaps one would have been less conscious of an unwholesome taint in her had she boasted a frank amour.

Mr. Shepherd studied her seriously, conscious that her every soft move was affected for his benefit. In his calculations of Newport he had forgotten to take Mrs. Prescott into account. He had remembered her as—well—truthfully he had not remembered her at all. But the latent sentimentality in her voice just now argued that she had remembered him. Some recollection of a scene in a conservatory some twenty years ago hurtled through his brain. But what did it really matter? He looked at his wife. Her fine-drawn

face stood out clear-cut against the dark background of her chair. The eyes were keenly intelligent. They were bent on him now and he realized he was being included in the conversation.

"I was telling Mrs. Prescott, John, about Alison. She didn't realize we had a daughter." The voice was quiet.

John Shepherd came forward. "She's spending the summer with friends in Bar Harbor. We didn't think Newport quite the place—"

He hesitated gracefully.

Mrs. Prescott shook her head with a certain roguishness.

"Are we really as bad as all that?" she said.

"I wasn't putting it on moral grounds, you know," continued Mr. Shepherd. "Alison is quite capable of looking out for herself." He turned to his wife.

"Show Mrs. Prescott that last picture," he suggested.

Mrs. Shepherd went upstairs to get the photograph.

Mrs. Prescott turned to her host a very languishing pair of eyes.

"So you have a daughter," she murmured, and he wasn't quite sure whether to read into her voice reproach for having violated past memories or congratulation upon his achievement.

"I hope you will like her," he answered, taking refuge in vagueness.

"You want us to be friends?" she pressed him.

"Of course."

He got up and walked to the window.

"Then we shall be," she promised him. "Bring Alison to Newport and I'll see that—"

Mrs. Shepherd appeared with the photograph, which showed a girl of eighteen, whose candid eyes even in the picture proved disconcerting.

"She's lovely," cried Mrs. Prescott, "and so like—let me see now—yes, *you*, Mr. Shepherd. I shall insist on your telegraphing her. We'll make her the hit of the season. There's practically no girl in the young set now to offer competition—a few hangers-on out for rich husbands—of course they never get them. But—yes—Alison will be *my* protegée. You know I haven't been so excited for a long time. You *will* wire her? I'm having a ball next Sunday night. Could you manage to get her here? My nephew is just back from a trip around the world with some college friends. You remember Billy—William Townsend Fitz-Herbert? This is his son."

She paused a minute in her eloquence, as if a new thought had presented itself. Then she looked a second at Mr. Shepherd, seemed to calculate in her fatuous way and then sighed as if in satisfaction at having thrown a momentous decision.

"Get her here by Sunday and leave everything to me," were her parting words.

Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd sat down and faced each other.

He began with a "Well?" and a smile.

"I'm afraid, John, you're in for it," she said. "What was it happened?"

"I can't seem to remember," he answered seriously. "It was something about a conservatory."

"You were always at your best in conservatories," she put in.

They smiled into each other's eyes.

"Shall we 'use' her?" he asked.

"Of course. Alison must have her chance to marry well. Whether she makes the most of it or not is her affair. We've managed it rather cleverly, don't you think?"

He nodded.

"Our reluctance to bring Alison here will spread like wild-fire. Leave it to dear Amy."

Then they paused a minute, each busy with thought. Then Mr. Shepherd took his wife's hand.

"Have you any regrets? You might have had that duffer of a Seattle millionaire, you know."

She shook her head decisively, "No regrets. But we are of the last generation. The present one is so pitiless; nothing counts but money—"

She rose. "We must give her her chance."

Then brightening, "No one will ever

guess that was our real motive for hazarding Newport again."

"And Fate in the shape of the delightful Amy Prescott is with us. I'll wire Alison at once."

This suggestion brought them both a pause.

"I wonder," said John Shepherd thoughtfully. "What do you say?"

Mrs. Shepherd sighed,

"Yes," she said at last. "I think so —for, after all, Alison is a free agent. Let her choose."

II

AMBITION was the keynote of Alison Shepherd's make-up. Her parents had realized this when as an imperious child she had demanded the impossible and brooked no thwarting in the getting it. As she grew older she had learned to cloak her extravagant desires under a seemingly contented acceptance of her little lot. She was devoted to her mother and father and appreciated to the full each sacrifice made by them to give her one or another advantage of education or travel.

Two years at the most fashionable boarding school in the country proved to Alison her fine capacity for getting the most out of things, a capacity which her wealthier friends with infinite opportunities seemed most sadly to lack. Alison, at that time, had never been abroad, so it was with a wrath hardly sustained that she was obliged to sit by while the more fortunate ones spoke carelessly of a winter on the Neva, mi-carême festivities at Nice or a motor trip through the chateaux district.

And what, in the end, had these girls got out of it all? Nothing. Alison felt the greater bitterness, as she measured her own remarkable acquisitive powers by comparison. A summer or two in the Adirondacks at some cheap hotel, a three weeks' trip to Washington one Christmas,—these were all she could boast of, but she so had the ability to bring the force of her own vitality to bear on every subject that she gave the impression of unusually wide experience. She was never at a loss for a topic, and an intelligent one, and showed the greatest possible poise in meeting any social emergency.

The summer after she had finished school, the Shepherds went abroad. The trip came as a surprise to Alison.

"But how—" she started to protest.

"Your father and I want one more trip, dear," exclaimed Mrs. Shepherd—"even if at a sacrifice."

Alison had turned quickly away. So they had guessed her chagrin. It was the complete realization that the whole thing was arranged for her benefit that made her unhappiness during the months abroad seem rank ingratitude. She feigned light heartedness, tried to throw herself into all the sight-seeing with the enthusiasm that was expected of her, but she felt that dead weight on her spirits that the drag of petty economies always brought her.

The little *pensions*, however neat and picturesque, bespoke a clientele that was always calculating means to ends, a people living on a margin. Alison was conscious in her association with them of a certain hardness in their make-up, as if the eternal struggle to keep up appearances had taken all their vitality, to the blunting of fine sensibilities and nice appreciation of the real value of things. The excursions planned about Paris were calculated so painfully down to the very sou, and each watched out lest his neighbor come off too easily in the final reckoning.

"Economy would clip an angel's wings," sighed Alison one day after she had returned from a picnic of young people at the little Trianon. "Couldn't we—er—move on, mother? Paris isn't really what I expected."

So it went. Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd put on a brave front and Alison struggled with her discontent. But the Esterelles looked small and dingy as seen through the hot glass of a third class carriage, and Rome proved humid and tiring. The Shepherds cut down their six months' trip to four and then hastened back to Philadelphia. Alison

knew she was responsible for the failure of the venture, and this knowledge but increased the gloom of her general outlook.

The following winter she devoted herself to her music. At first, shut away for the most part from everything that suggested easy expenditure and careless wealth, there had come a certain rest from her strivings. The atmosphere of the little Shepherd household was one of peace and Alison's spirit responded. That is, for a while. But when summer came around with its various suggestions of seaside and mountain resort, Alison again felt that restless striving within her and put herself down as the most uneasy soul present-day education had created to its ends of disillusion and discontent.

Then had come the invitation to Bar Harbor from a school friend, and, close upon her arrival there, her mother's and father's strange, bewildering move to Newport and her own speedy summons.

"Be here, if possible, by Sunday," the telegram had read, and Alison had felt herself gripped by something that was half a tumultuous joy and half terror.

She did not formulate to herself what Newport stood for; what it did stand for was all too vague in its wonder of infinite possibilities to be brought down to the crudity of definite thought.

But Alison knew her chance was being offered her and braced to a future ateem with events. There was a certain sporting fatalism in her nature that made for a tremulous eagerness in the face of any uncertainty, with the nicest possible balance, however, of youth's confidence in the outcome.

Mr. Shepherd met her at the train two days later. The greetings were formal and well ordered.

"I hope it didn't put you out," he said. "It's just a dinner given by Mrs Anthony Prescott. Yes, a big affair, I imagine. Your mother and I thought you'd enjoy it."

"Oh, immensely yes!" answered Alison as she raised her steady eyes to her father's, and there was nothing in her even tones to indicate she got the full force of the manœuvre.

Good taste had been refined to an essence in the Shepherd family.

III

THE dinner was just one of those big affairs that make up the general routine of Society. It was conspicuous only in that it was the first of the season. But to Alison, versed simply in Philadelphia suburban lore, the whole thing took on the proportions of an extravagant dream. She was conscious at first only of a blur of flowers and faces and music; it wasn't till they had been seated at the table for some time that things assumed their proper proportions and she was able to take in the experience as an actual flesh and blood event.

The long table was softly lighted, the rest of the room dim almost to shadow. There seemed a luxury in the very exclusion of everything outside, a defiance of anything as worth while except deft interplay of wit and emotion.

The face of the woman opposite stood out as the first thing clear of outline. It was a beautiful face, fine drawn, but there was a touch of hardness about the mouth and an ill-concealed calculation in the eyes. Her costume was an achievement of grace and daring that could not help but provoke attention and —comment. Alison wondered a little as her eyes rested on the matchless pearls about the woman's throat. Then her glance strayed to the far end of the table, where she could just see her father being purred over by their hostess. She had not liked Mrs. Prescott from the beginning; she judged her now even at a distance an unfavorable contrast to the woman opposite, to whom her attention constantly reverted.

This woman was evidently a brilliant talker and seemed now to be having a set-to in regard to some fair one with a man near by.

"But, Suzanne, you have to grant the dear lady goodness—" the man was saying.

"But *that* sort of goodness—"

"There's only the one sort for a woman," he cut in. "She is or she isn't—"

"How absurd you are, Cyril! There are as many different kinds of goodness as there are women. Hers now is the sort that gives goodness in the present age such a bad reputation."

Everybody laughed.

"Just as there are some women who make badness a thing of good repute—" queried the man and lowered his lids almost imperceptibly, just to take in the throat with its gorgeous encasement of pearls.

"Of course." She showed her ready intelligence with a quick smile. "It's the constructive against the destructive, don't you see?"

"Suzanne," put in the man, "can you honestly—"

"Oh, 'honestly,'" flashed Suzanne. "That's putting it on an ethical basis. You put me at a disadvantage."

"Economically speaking, perhaps," murmured some woman.

"Thank you, exactly the word we want," said Suzanne sweetly. "Go ahead, Cyril—economically speaking, what?"

"Does it pay?" said Cyril.

"Oh, as to that—"

Suzanne was about to dare her utmost when her eyes caught those of the girl across the table.

She hesitated a second, held by that clear gaze that so obviously showed admiration, then shrugged.

"I refuse to be put through the n-th degree, Cyril. You're getting too technical to be interesting."

She turned away deliberately and then smiled across at Alison.

"You will find us bewildering," she said by way of preliminary.

"Yes," admitted Alison. "But I like it—to be kept guessing—"

"Ah, that's dangerous," put in the older woman. "The game has its fascination, but it has also its worries."

"Now, *maman*, you're getting cynical." This from a youth on Alison's right whom she realized now she had been comfortably ignoring.

She turned to meet a pair of kindly grey eyes.

"Yes, I've been here from the beginning," he said in answer to her start. "I've made several attempts to break in."

"Oh!" Alison gave him a smile of comprehension. "I'm sorry. But isn't it wonderful?"

"What?" he returned. "I'm afraid I'm a little stupid."

"All this." She indicated with her hand the sweep of the glittering table, the people and the flowers and the music. "It's so—so different."

"Is it?" he queried, and looked about with interest. "Well, I don't know. Strip people of their clothes—"

"Oh, no," she protested and then blushed faintly. "Such beautiful clothes!" she added by way of explanation.

He turned and studied her quietly, and she had plenty of chance to take in the easy lounge of the athletic figure, the bronzed skin and shock of yellow hair.

"You like beautiful clothes," he said.

"Yes," she admitted candidly, "I do. That woman over there—" She indicated the woman with the pearls.

"That is my mother," he said.

"Oh!" Alison was startled.

"She is the most beautiful woman here," he continued quietly. "The best, too," he added after a second, and there was a wonderful earnestness in his young conviction. Then with his ready smile,

"I'm Dick Ramsdell, you know. But then, there's really no reason why you should know. I'm not of the bunch of celebs whose newspaper pictures blaze the trail for introduction."

Alison showed her appreciation.

"I suppose the most famous people in the country are here," she added.

"And infamous too," he put in.

"I was too dazed to get many of the names," she confessed.

"There's old Wentworth just across," said Dick. "And, by Jove, you know you haven't addressed a word to Toddy yet."

"Toddy?" she questioned him with her eyes.

"William Townsend Fitz-Herbert, seventh or eighth, I forget which. In vulgar parlance—Toddy—to your left."

Alison turned quickly to her other neighbor.

"I am so rude," she excused herself with a charming smile.

"Not at all." The tones were dull, and Alison realized in a flash the man was drunk. She got it all too surely in the heavy glazed eyes that met hers, in the unsteady hand just raising a glass of champagne to his lips. He was fat and the tight fit of his dinner clothes fell just short of compromising his tailor.

He stared at her stupidly, but Alison had an uncomfortable feeling that she was being passed upon, sized up no doubt by the Fitz-Herbert standards, of which she was already cognizant through the intercourse, slight though it was, that she had had with Mrs. Prescott.

"Like it here?" he asked.

The English turn to the "here" she thought ludicrous, but she realized in spite of everything that the man was a personality to be dealt with. Back of that mask of obesity and sodden stupidity there was an arrogance that compelled. He was a Fitz-Herbert, a man of millions, and his insolent security in this was the more insulting in that he seemed to vaunt the fact that he needed to possess nothing further.

He repeated his question and Alison realized she had been staring wide-eyed as she speculated.

"Oh, yes, rather," she made her voice indifferent.

Somehow, she resented the fact that he had made her think.

"We're going to dance—later. You and I are to lead off."

The words were thick; it was all a part of that dull arrogance of his, which made him accept as only his due the effort it cost her to make out his meaning.

Alison felt a sudden flare and was about to retort with decision when she felt Mrs. Prescott's eyes upon her. There was in them a sentimentality that seemed to embrace speculatively herself and the man at her side, and Alison read too surely the benediction that lurked in her placid smile. She felt suddenly dizzy.

"You and Toddy are to lead off," she just dimly made out Mrs. Prescott's voice.

As she forced herself with a supreme effort to smile an acceptance she caught the eyes of the woman across the table and had a strange idea that she read something almost like pity in their depths.

IV

THE dance with Toddy proved, after all, not such an ordeal. It resolved itself into but one rather unsteady whirl about the pretty ballroom and then a suggestion on Toddy's part that they stop. This suited Alison perfectly. She had given herself up to Toddy's humid embrace in the first place with an ill-concealed disgust; she welcomed the suggested release. As they were about to sit down she glimpsed Dick Ramsdell's length of limb near by. He hastened up.

"You're a slacker, Tod," he said.

Toddy mopped his brow and showed a placid satisfaction when Dick took Alison off his hands and so permitted an escape to the bar.

Alison smiled up at Dick as she settled herself with a sigh in his arms.

"Isn't he—dreadful?" she said.

Dick said nothing, but seemed to be turning something over in his mind.

"We've just been around the world together," he vouchsafed at last.

Alison showed her surprise. "You're *friends* then?"

Dick gave this careful consideration.

"No, not that. It's—hang it all—I can't explain. But there's something

back of all that fat, you know. I think, sometimes, it's just the damned power money has over all of us."

"You care for money then?" asked Alison thoughtfully.

"Frankly, I don't know, but—isn't it all a bungle though? My trip 'round the world with Toddy and all that—But I say, you're a beautiful dancer." He smiled down at her.

She sighed a little.

"Let's forget Toddy," she murmured.

He pressed her closer and they gave themselves up to the sway of the dance. It was remarkable what a ready zest they took in each other, and the one dance blurred into a second and a third before they realized they were creating comment.

The music stopped and they found themselves brought up short directly in front of a group that had been watching them closely.

Mrs. Shepherd put out her hands to her daughter.

"You're enjoying it, dear?"

"Oh, yes," cried Alison. "The orchestra is perfect."

She addressed herself to Mrs. Prescott, who patted her kindly. Somehow Alison felt a little apologetic to her hostess for the summary discarding of Toddy, but Mrs. Prescott gave no indication at all of ill-feeling. Alison noticed in her, as she had so surely in Toddy, that smug security in Fitz-Herbert lineage that would be incapable of grasping any belittlement of its superiority. If Toddy was not with Alison, it was because his whim prompted him not to be. If he had chosen so to be, he would have been. This constituted, as it were, a sort of Fitz-Herbert slogan. So, Mrs. Prescott's equilibrium was not at all disturbed by Alison's apparent absorption in another man.

It was only with Mrs. Ramsdell, who was one of the group, that she was conscious of a certain strain in the situation.

"A bully dance, *maman*," she had heard Dick say. "I enjoyed it—"

"I wish you might learn to be less obvious, Dickie," his mother retorted with a certain tartness.

"What a brute you are," complained Dick. "Here I am after a trip 'round the world and—"

Alison merged into their conversation at this point.

"Were we obvious?" she asked.

This directness took Mrs. Ramsdell somewhat aback, but she was quite equal to meeting the situation.

"If you young people would leave all the ropes to us," she started.

"Can't be done," put in Dick. "It's not in the nature of young people."

Mrs. Ramsdell shook her head.

"Well—maybe you're right. There's the music again. Marjorie's been looking for you, Dick. Run along. I want to talk to Alison."

Alison's conversation with this woman whose charm she had recognized so quickly was not the least conspicuous thing in her evening's experience. They had discussed surface things—travel, motors, yachts, even clothes; but, however frivolous the topic, Alison had a feeling that its selection was a matter of care, and that the seeming anomaly in reality tended to prove, though very subtly, the one thing—the necessity of money to happiness in the present generation.

Alison had always prided herself on being a good talker. She found a certain exhilaration in thus having her wits sharpened against those of the brilliant Suzanne. But in the end she wasn't quite sure just what line the clever lady had meant to take. Was it that she was giving advice or sounding a warning? Allison wondered, but put it away from her for the present as something to be dealt with later, when things would be less bewildering and she was more attuned to the conditions of her new existence.

The dances that followed with Dick, however, were slightly more tempered, and she found herself listening almost with interest later on to Toddy's befuddled account of the new yacht he was having built.

V

THE four people who had provoked her attention the night of the Prescott ball proved to be those whose influence was to dominate Alison's whole summer and eventually mark out the trend of her existence.

Of the four, Dick was the least complex. He possessed an open nature to the charm of which the least susceptible of women could not help but respond. He was lovable to a degree and was spoiled absurdly.

Alison had caught his fancy in the beginning. Perhaps there was something in her very reserve that captured him by contrast. Perhaps it was he had reached that age when flirtations fail to satisfy and a healthy youth craves a mate of his own. But whatever the reason, Dick was in love and proved an ardent lover. Alison had resisted a little at first his rather tempestuous attentions, then had accepted them as a beautiful tribute, and eventually, to her own discomfort, found herself responding in kind.

Dick's physical attraction was a potent one, and Alison found herself all too surely unstrung in dealing with him. He would catch her in his arms and press his cheek against hers; her struggle for release was the less convincing, the more she realized the response her nature held to his youthful eagerness. It was all so vivid and wonderful.

But Alison turned from the final reckoning with a sigh. She had learned much about the Ramsdells, not the least from Mrs. Ramsdell herself. She had come to realize they were simply of that class of hangers-on that live by their wits and sacrifice everything to the end of social attainments. Suzanne Ramsdell had managed to get by so far and was now staking the future on a rich match for her son. It was to all appearances easy. Little Marjorie Cuthbert had responded in short order to Dick's indisputable attractions, and society was now awaiting the final culmination of the affair with a certain satisfaction in the rightness of the arrangement. With the appearance of Alison, Dick had showed the perverse in him, wilfully ignoring the expectant Marjorie in pursuit of the new comer. Mrs. Ramsdell knew the uselessness of arguing with her son, so decided in the end to play Alison and reckon with the ambition she had so surely sensed in her nature.

She surprised Alison alone one afternoon at the Casino. She was sitting, thinking deeply. There had been a scene that morning with Dick a little more intense and overpowering than any before. She could still feel his kisses on her cheek and hear the insistent voice that had such strange power over her. There was a vague, unformed desire in her to let things drift, to put off decision. She shut her eyes and gave herself up to an insidious languor that was new and disconcerting to her. Then it was she heard Mrs. Ramsdell's voice as through a haze. She opened her eyes and sighed.

"You look tired, Alison. Suppose I take you home with me for tea."

Alison consented wearily and the two drove to the Ramsdell cottage almost in silence.

"Serve tea in my sitting-room," said Mrs. Ramsdell to the maid, and the two passed quietly upstairs.

Alison had never been in this particular room before. It was very charming with its casement windows and careless array of books and music. There were photographs about, too, and Alison felt a queer little feeling almost of possession as she glimpsed Dick in the various stages of his growth. She wandering about restlessly, knowing that the conversation about to ensue would be of an intimacy she felt ill fitted to meet.

"And this,"—Alison paused before the picture of a man so like Dick there could be no question of the relationship. —"This is Dick's father?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Ramsdell, and came over beside her.

The two looked intently at the boyish face, so cheerful and eager. The eyes looked at one with a confidence

that defied disillusion as if the present were so full and strong it could never pass away. Alison felt a wave of sadness pass over her as she looked.

"How long has he been dead?" she faltered in a low voice.

Mrs. Ramsdell thought a minute.

"He is not dead," she said at last. "He is alive in Vienna."

"Oh!" The blood rushed from Alison's face and left her quite white. "I thought—"

"The world thinks so, too," Mrs. Ramsdell eased her off. "But he is still alive. Alison, I think I shall tell you the truth for your own sake and Dick's."

The words were clear cut but there was something in the timbre of the voice that sounded the depths of an emotion long suppressed.

"You are in love with Dick."

She said it quietly, stating it as a fact, not presenting it as a reproach.

"Yes," Alison barely articulated and the tears came to her eyes from the sheer force of feeling the admission aroused.

She knew now definitely and for the first time that she did love Dick. That was the meaning of all her strange unrest, her unformed desires and tremulous hesitancy to face the future. She loved Dick but she knew inevitably in the face of the sadness the realization of it brought her that there was disaster and sorrow involved in that love. She knew it as she looked into Mrs. Ramsdell's eyes, bent so kindly upon her, and she knew it as she faced again the picture of the man she had always believed to be dead.

"Alison," Mrs. Ramsdell's firm tone showed that she had herself again in hand. "*He* was like Dick and I was like you. We believed in love and each other and other people, too, for that matter. And we thought money didn't count, that there were other things. Neither of us realized that deep down in our hearts there was ambition and love of luxury and—don't' you see? It was all right in the abandon of our first love and for a year or two after Dick was born—but afterwards—when it came to economizing, and calculating means to every desired end and—oh, Alison, the misery of an ambitious woman, and man, too, who is forced to reckon in terms of pennies! We grew discontented, restless. He started to gamble, and I—I slipped into a flirtation with a wealthy man, just to secure us a trip on his yacht, for we were down and out that summer. It was at Cannes."

She laughed a little and fingered the pearls that were always about her neck.

"I didn't mean it to go to any lengths, but—any woman is helpless when it comes to a man with millions—and—I wonder, are you beginning to understand? After the first affair, it was easy. We'd gotten used to having money and we were willing to sacrifice anything to keep up a life of ease. Then he fell in with a wealthy woman and I was forced to stand by and watch and live on her money. Oh—"

The woman's voice had become more and more agitated as she poured out her confession. It broke finally in a shudder and she buried her face in her hands.

"And Dick—he doesn't know really what I am, but I think sometimes there must be a doubt. It's because there has been some one these last two years I sent him around the world with Toddy."

Then in a whisper,

"It has been terrible. I have managed to keep up a certain decency of appearance—but he—Dick's father—he has gone down and down—"

She raised her eyes again to the picture and remained quite still. Alison had listened tense and quiet, her outward calm quite belying the tumult and protest within her. The tragedy of it all seemed the more cruel as she saw the inevitable bearing it must needs have upon her own life. Then, suddenly, she broke into sobs that shook her convulsively. The older woman watched her.

"It is better," she said at last, "to suffer now, this way. I make my appeal

first to you—to save Dick from—what his father is. If that fails—I shall give him the straight truth—and let him save you from being what I am. Dick would respond—"

Alison checked her sobs and rose.

"There will be no need to appeal to him. Let him keep his illusions about you—I don't think he could understand, as I do."

Suzanne put her hands on the girl's shoulders—"You *do* understand?"

"Yes," said Alison, "I do."

"Then you don't condemn."

"No," Alison shook her head sadly, "which proves I needed the warning the more."

Suzanne drew her into her arms and the two stood a moment in close embrace.

"Poor Dickie!" sighed Suzanne.

But that brought Alison again to the verge of tears. She made a brave struggle, however, and forced herself to smile as she gathered up her wraps to go. "I want to get away before he comes. I couldn't quite face him this way."

But just as they were about to part, Suzanne had a second's break. "Alison, can it be we are bungling—"

This time it was Alison's turn to strike the note of comforting decision.

"No," she said quietly, and the evenness of her tones and the steadiness of her eyes brought to the older woman a sense of security and a feeling of the rightness of their decision.

Again Suzanne put her arms about the girl and kissed her.

Then they parted in silence.

VI

THERE was a dinner that night at the Prescotts'. Alison pleaded fatigue and a slight headache, so Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd went without her, promising to make the proper excuses.

"I shall have a quiet dinner here by myself and then go right to bed," she had said.

Mrs. Shepherd felt a tinge of sadness as she kissed her daughter goodnight. Perhaps she realized something of Alison's struggle, but she realized, too, the disparity of the generations and felt herself with her old-fashioned equipment of ideas unequal to meeting the problems that were the natural outcome of the present-day system of education and thought. So she would not have ventured an instant to tender advice.

Besides, Alison, even as a very young girl, had always shown herself remarkably competent to handle any situation. The only recognition Mrs. Shepherd now made of the fact that there was a crisis at hand was to give Alison a second kiss before leaving and to express a murmured hope in Mr. Shepherd's ear, when they were safely ensconced in the Prescott motor, that everything would turn out all right.

Alison did not go right to bed after she had finished her dinner. She lingered instead on the little balcony at the back of the house. It was a glorious night, deep blue, with here and there a star above the black shapeless trees.

Alison breathed deep, and shut her eyes. She knew there was a thought, a decision, a mood of immense despair waiting to be dealt with, but the peace and rest of the summer night helped her to keep them back. Her nerves, strained by the afternoon's scene to a high tension, relaxed gradually, and she fell into a half sleep that soothed her tired spirit.

She was aroused a little later by the murmur of voices in the hall, and with a sharp pang of quickened desire she realized it was Dick. She got to her feet tremulously in time to confront him as he came through the French window. He was all aglow with the youthful exuberance so characteristic of him, and the grey eyes showed tenderly solicitous.

"You are ill," he said, and took both her hands. Then in a minute he had her in his arms, pressing her warmly to him, and kissing her eyes, her cheeks, her hair. Then, forcing her head back a little and with a second's deliberation as if to get the full force of the experi-

ence, he put his lips on hers. They clung together as if some unseen force were trying to hold them apart. There was a desperation in their abandon, as if they all too surely realized the present only was to be theirs and they must make the most of it.

Then on a sudden Alison crumpled up in a chair and started to sob. Dick knelt beside her.

"Alison, darling—I'm sorry. But I love you so—I love you. You must marry me—I—oh,—can't you see?"

He had his arms about her again and was pressing her wet cheek to his. But this time she struggled away and got to her feet.

"No, no," she said. "It can't be —I—"

Dick seized her roughly and covered her protesting mouth with kisses.

"It has to be. We love each other too much—we—"

She pushed him away and there was a gleam in her eyes this time that brought him up short.

"I can't," she said. "I—we—we haven't enough—"

This brought him a light laugh.

"Money—what does it matter? I have a small income my father left me when he died—*Maman* has been a clever manager—"

But she shook her head.

"No," she said quietly. "That would not do." Then after a pause she said, as if with a supreme effort: "Dick, I love you, but this sort of thing won't do. I must—well, I must get on."

She gave it to him straight, but her resolution to keep to her stand nearly deserted her when she read the pain struggling with incredulity in the grey eyes that had been so eagerly alight but a minute before.

He put his hand to his head and groped for a chair to steady himself.

"You mean," he stammered, "that money—"

Then a light came to him.

"By God, it's Toddy— That's why you came to Newport!"

She cowered a little as his wrath blazed out.

"You, you've played me for the fun of the thing, and thrown me over when it came to a showdown. Good God, and I—I thought you one of the decent ones—" Her white face with its dark eyes feverishly aglow held him a minute.

"Alison," his anger broke. "There's a mistake somewhere. You—tell me there's a mistake. You're doing it for my good, perhaps,—Marjorie Cuthbert —you've heard rumors—Alison."

The pleading in his eyes, that deepened the pain in her heart, served also to strengthen her resolution.

"There's no mistake," she said in a low voice, and again her eyes were steady. "It's deep down in me—the love of money and what it brings. I would sacrifice anything—you—myself, just for that."

Dic turned away.

"Well," he said, "you've done for me —finished me."

"No, no," she cried and the pain in her eyes was so genuine that his anger again dropped and he took her in his arms. Her lips met his once more.

Then Alison dropped into a chair.

"Go now," she said faintly.

"After that?" Dick's face showed suddenly hard and there were lines about his eyes and mouth. He looked tired too, as if the scene had taken the best out of him.

"After that?" he reiterated.

Alison closed her eyes as if too weary to make a definite assent, and when she opened them again she found that he had gone.

VII

ALISON was ill for three weeks. "A slight nervous break-down," said her mother; "Newport gaiety," announced her father. People were very kind. There was a constant string of callers and Alison's room was filled with tokens of their good will.

The Ramsdells "inquired" formally for a few days and then left Newport for good. Their sudden move was generally set down to another of Suzanne's vagaries. No one seemed conscious, in

spite of Dick's very obvious attentions to Alison, that there could have been any complication in that direction to prompt the very abrupt departure. Suzanne was too much of a diplomat to allow the entanglement of her son with anyone whose income was not a matter of note.

Besides, when it came to Alison, there was Toddy.

Mrs. Anthony Prescott in the very beginning had started out on this hypothesis. It was evident in her attitude toward Alison, in her officious patronage of Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd. It was even a matter of open discussion between Mrs. Prescott and her friends.

"The girl has family, breeding, education, beauty. She'll quite do," she had announced decisively, and Society had accepted her verdict.

There had never been the slightest doubt in anybody's mind as to the outcome. The Fitz-Herberts, that is, the Fitz-Herbert men, had always been fools; but the less claim each had to recognition as an individual, the more he added to the strength of the Fitz-Herbert tradition; for the very absurdity of his arrogant reliance upon that tradition constituted a call upon the faith of others. Eventually, therefore, Society as a whole fell in line and admitted the validity of the Fitz-Herbert claim. They demanded by right of the excess of their millions a prestige, and they got it. When a Fitz-Herbert wanted a thing, other people stopped bidding.

As I have said, the men for the most part were fools and usually addicted to drink, but they had numbered as their wives the prettiest women each generation in turn had had to offer. No one had ever heard of a woman demurring when she was given to understand that she had been picked for the lofty purpose of carrying on the Fitz-Herbert line. The thing was inconceivable, of course.

So with Alison. She had been looked upon from the beginning as chosen for the sacred cause. Even her very violent flirtation with Dick had caused not a single ripple in the millpond of the Fitz-Herbert equanimity. Toddy, to all appearances, made no advances, but it seemed to Alison she could never get away from him. At the Casino, the beach, the Golf Club, every time she turned around she found herself looking into his dull eyes. He was always there, blinking at her, stupidly, but inevitably. And he seemed the more there for his very fatness and tight clothes.

Once in sheer desperation she tried to talk to him, draw him out, for she was haunted by the feeling that, back of that obesity, there *was* something. What? She tormented herself in her efforts to define it. But it was there, a something that made his hypothesis that she would one day accept the Fitz-Herbert tradition not too absurd. There is nothing so tenacious of purpose as stupidity, and there is nothing more difficult to combat because of its very invulnerability to attack.

Alison tried to talk to Toddy, but invariably found herself instead returning his open stare and pondering the source of the power he possessed to keep himself always in the foreground of her thoughts. She turned with the greater zest to her innocent pleasure in Dick, the more complicated she found the Fitz-Herbert riddle.

In the end she became almost terrorized. It was as if she were being brought, the more cruelly for its deliberate graduation, into the realization that she was not a free agent. She had struggled at first, but her inability to place the thing she was struggling against made her realize the futility of her effort.

The force, so potent in its blind workings, was a thing without; it was incarnated in the people about her who banded together to uphold the Fitz-Herbert tradition. It was there in the deadly form of the tradition itself. But its most powerful manifestation was in her own soul. She might have set herself against the world, had she been secure in her own tenets, but she knew all too surely her own weaknesses

that would work out to the eventual victory of ambition.

It was because she felt all this that her love for Dick was the sweeter for its simple naturalness. But she did not need Suzanne's kindly interference to know that that love could never reach its culmination. Her interview with Suzanne had precipitated matters, that was all, with the result that Alison's troubled mind, not quite ready for the crisis, had given way under the strain it was not fully prepared to meet.

She was delirious for several days. In that time her father and mother caught a glimpse of her suffering and realized the ordeal she had passed through. They discussed in low tones the advisability of taking her away, but in the end did nothing.

"She's free to choose," they reiterated, and in their kindly endeavor to do the best for their daughter's happiness they shut their eyes to the fact that sometimes brute force of circumstance has to be reckoned with.

Mrs. Prescott was the very first person Alison recognized when she pulled herself together, and it was Mrs. Prescott who dominated the days of convalescence. She was there in her officiousness as inevitably as Toddy in the preceding weeks of gaiety had been there in his obesity. Alison accepted her presence wearily. It seemed all a piece of that future that stretched out so dully ahead, a future it never occurred to Alison now to question. It seemed as if her illness had taken away all power of resistance, as if the force she had struggled so bitterly against had taken possession of her during the moments of her unconsciousness, and she had waked to find herself a captive. She forced herself into a semblance of cheerfulness, however, to satisfy the questioning, worried look she so often surprised in her mother's eyes.

It was Mrs. Prescott who told her of the Ramsdells' departure.

"Dick is a dear," said that lady without a trace of ill feeling. "I rather distrust Suzanne, however."

Alison took the news quietly, but that night she cried herself wearily to sleep.

A month later things reached the expected climax. Alison was sitting in a steamer chair on the little back porch. It was the first time she had been there since the night she dismissed Dick and the whole place seemed full of memories and reproach. Mrs. Shepherd was reading to her, but Alison was not listening. There was an unusual nervousness visible in Mrs. Shepherd's whole appearance. She put down the book at last and rose.

"I am going driving with Mrs. Prescott, dear," she said.

"I am glad," murmured Alison. "It will do you good."

"She thought—that is—Toddy has wanted to see you for some time—" Mrs. Shepherd's voice, usually so firm, tapered to a point tremulously.

"Oh!" Alison brought the word out sharply.

Then, very quietly,

"Of course—he can stay and have tea with me."

She smiled up at her mother. "And you take as long a drive as you choose."

Mrs. Shepherd looked relieved and went at once to get ready.

So it was coming at last. Alison wasn't sure whether the strange feeling that flooded her as she waited was relief, or protest or fear. But there seemed a sardonic irony in the fact that the little balcony was to be the scene of the encounter. Evidently not even a memory was to be left her untouched by the Fitz-Herbert claim.

VIII

"How do you take your tea?"

"I won't have any, thank you. It's too awfully hot."

Alison raised her eyes quickly. Toddy had been drinking. She had avoided looking at him up to now to spare him a certain embarrassment she felt inevitable to the situation. But there was no embarrassment in the dull eyes that met hers, only a stupid insolence

that seemed taking for granted her own surrender in short order.

She turned away hurriedly in disgust. She loathed him when he sat huddled that way, his fatness accentuated by the buttoning of a single button across his chest.

His words came thick, and, as on the first night she had met him, she felt a quick resentment at the effort she was obliged to make to get his meaning.

"Going to Europe for the winter," she managed to make out.

"Indeed?" she vaguely stirred her tea, and sank back into her chair.

She felt on the verge of tears. There was a smug impregnability about the man before her that filled her with a desire to strike out wildly and fight and yet that sapped her strength to weak surrender. She closed her eyes. There was silence. She opened them again.

"Well, what about it?" she queried almost petulantly. Anything rather than stand that perpetual lidless stare!

"Europe—good for the health," his words were less blurred this time. "I want to take you with me."

Alison was fully conscious that the expression of his desire was in the form of an ultimatum. She choked down her rage.

"In what capacity, pray?" she asked.

"As Mrs. Fitz-Herbert, of course."

The fine quality of her irony had quite escaped him. Again her anger flared; then flickered and was gone.

He had managed to get to his feet by now. "I'm—er—planning to sail about Thanksgiving. Do you—er—think you could fix it up then?"

She met his stare weakly. Then she roused herself.

"Yes," she said with decision and smiled strangely as he took her hand and raised it to his lips.

There was no courtesy nor deference in the action, only a puffy arrogance. Alison allowed herself time to get him in all the grotesque absurdity of his pose, then drew her hand away.

"I am tired," she said. "Would you mind—?"

But he already had his hat in his hand. The business was all settled up, and the Reading Room was just around the corner. Alison did not even open her eyes as she said good-bye. The thing that curiously remained in her consciousness when she was left alone was that Toddy in his stooping posture had revealed the fact that he was getting bald.

IX

Alison and Toddy went directly abroad after they were married. It proved a rough trip and in the long swaying days and nights Alison had plenty of opportunity to think. She had deliberately not done so before as if the full realization of her life with Toddy might in some way work to the overthrow of her ambition. Ambition—the satisfying of a nature that had always craved an extravagant best!

But in the first few days of her married life, with her delicate nature shocked at every turn by the grossness of the man she had agreed to spend her life with, she questioned bitterly her choice. Luxury seemed a pitiful compensation for the violation of the fineness of her sensibilities.

In the end she succeeded in dulling herself to an acceptance of things and then set herself down as the more despicable that she could bring herself to such a passivity. Toddy was drunk all the time. The moments when she could have stolen away, she curiously lingered as if lacking the initiative to free herself of him. So, during the whole week's trip she was sated with his presence, and thought of the future with a dull despair.

Then came Paris, the glorious Paris that money makes possible. The wonderful old house that Toddy had taken on the Faubourg St. Germain and the gaiety that invited on all sides did much to quell that first regret that had come to Alison on her honeymoon. As the wife of William Townsend Fitz-Herbert the seventh, the most exclusive set in Paris became hers.

She had known herself all along, and

with no degree of conceit, as cleverer than the average. Society woman, she now used all her talents to the making of a brilliant salon. She became one of the most popular hostesses in Paris, remarkable for a certain sparkle of wit backed by a ready intelligence. The fact that there was a caustic quality in her wit, a tinge of cynicism in her outlook, only helped further her reputation as a powerful factor in the continental smart set.

Her social success, however, but accentuated the sense of degradation that her obligations to Toddy always aroused in her. But the more keenly she felt that degradation the more she set herself with a deliberate hardness to psychologize herself into a complete satisfaction with her lot. She plunged into every diversion that offered and keyed her effort to greater and greater triumphs.

She was extravagant to an absurd degree, and satisfied every whim, whatever the cost. Her motors were of a luxury remarkable even for rich Americans, her gowns the gossip of every costumer on the Rue de la Paix. Her marriage had been a contract. She was fulfilling her part; her bills were evidence that she was taking care that Toddy should fulfill his.

Easter found them on the Riviera, at Nice, where Toddy's new yacht joined them. It was on a trial trip that Alison and Toddy took alone that Alison gauged the full measure of her dislike for her husband. She had asked some six or eight of her friends to join her, in defiance of Toddy, who had dully expressed the wish that they go alone. She had taken the step, not so much because of any devotion to her friends, for the end of the season had found her somewhat bored with the best of them, but because of a shrinking terror at being alone with her husband and a desire to assert her own identity by doing something contrary to his wishes.

"I have asked the Southerlands," she began one night at dinner and then stopped short.

A strange feeling, half weakness, half apprehension, had seized her as she looked into the stupid eyes raised dully to hers. She was tired out, and the haunting riddle of those eyes reduced her to an irritability that destroyed all sense of security in herself.

"I have asked the Southerlands and some others," she repeated, this time in a voice that evidenced her nervousness.

"We will go alone," repeated Toddy.

Alison looked away.

"Unfortunately I've asked them."

"We will go alone," repeated Toddy.

"But why?" protested Alison.

"Why?" Toddy fixed her with his stare. "You need the rest."

"What does it matter, one way or the other?" Alison showed her irritation.

"You must keep yourself in good condition."

He said the words slowly and distinctly and Alison rose hastily as the full force of his meaning struck her.

"So that's it—" she cut in. "You're worried about the next generation?"

"Of course—the Fitz-Herberts—"

But she silenced him with a gesture.

"Well—I refuse to go. I—" But at that she weakened. "I—"

Then she sank into her seat, burying her face in her hands, and gave herself up to the tears that were inevitable to her mood.

She went, of course, and alone. She refused to admit for an instant that a conflict of wills had taken place in which Toddy for all his listless apathy had proved the victor. She put her submission down as temporary, as a direct result of nerves that rendered resistance for the moment impossible. But she hated Toddy the more in that she considered he had not played fair.

Not the least of her wild resentment against him was the fact, covertly expressed, to be sure, but none the less arrogant for its assumption, that she was held simply as a means for the satisfactory promulgation of the race. That there would be children she knew;

that was a part of the Fitz-Herbert tradition, but up to now she had failed to take into account the bearing that responsibility must have on her every-day existence. And now she had been brought up short—"You must keep yourself in good condition."

She shuddered, but gave in to the need of change she was beginning so acutely to feel.

The trip on the yacht, however, proved but an aggravation of her discontent and brought her no rest whatever. Shut in for two whole weeks with Toddy, she was obliged to give herself up to the full sweep of her disgust for him.

He was drunk all the time, and as he sat stupidly blinking in the sun, more absurd than ever in a jaunty white flannel yachting suit, she could have wept from sheer ennui at the sight of him. But the strange part of it was, she could not ignore him; she came round inevitably to the watching of him and sat for hours by his side, speculating and brooding as he grew drunker and drunker. The last two days of the trip she locked herself in her own room, pleading a headache.

The yacht proved the scene of many a brilliant party that spring, but it never again boasted a connubial *tête-à-tête*.

There followed a summer at Newport which was but a repetition of Alison's triumph in Paris. Mrs. Prescott showed a smug satisfaction in the success of her protegée which she no doubt attributed not to any charm of Alison but to her possession of the Fitz-Herbert name. So there was, of course, no call for jealousy.

Alison, by the light of her experience as a married woman, was now able to analyze Mrs. Prescott more accurately and took a certain cold pleasure, that had in it almost an element of the cruel, in studying her weaknesses. She judged her as unpleasant a representative of a decadent race as Toddy. There was a sentimental unwholesomeness about her, a soft treachery. Alison realized she would have played her false in a second had her career as Toddy's wife proved less exemplary. She contrasted her often in her mind with Suzanne, who always stood out clear of outline, a brilliant exponent of frank sin.

Alison succeeded, however, in cloaking her dislike for her husband's aunt with a hard graciousness, and the world voted the relationship between the two a perfect one.

Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd spent the summer in Newport and in her ability to put within their reach some of the comforts of life they had always been obliged to do without, Alison found her greatest pleasure.

So with its lights and shadows and interplay of regret and satisfaction the first year of Alison's married life passed away. The second year brought to her a son, the third another son and the fourth a daughter. Alison took no joy whatever in her children. She accepted them as just so many material evidences of a union that was becoming more and more intolerable. For she had not been well since the birth of her first child and had been obliged to give up almost entirely the brilliant social career that had dazzled her in the beginning.

So she had been thrown back little by little upon her own resources, upon the man whose increasing intemperance made him an object of loathing. She hated him by himself; she hated him in his smug satisfaction when he had his children about him. They were just so many little sodden atoms of humanity, stamped with Toddy's image. There were the same round, unseeing eyes that blinked in the sun, the same flabbiness of body, the same stupid arrogance that stamped the Fitz-Herberts from the cradle.

Alison remembered a Chinese roley-poley she had had as a child. It opened and had within it a succession of other roley-poleys of exactly the same stamp, but of graduated size. She was reminded of nothing so much as this set of grotesque images whenever she looked at Toddy with his children at his

side. She felt if she tipped one of them over he would go rolling about and then come up again to confront her with his unceasing blink.

So she gave her children over entirely to servants, expensive ones, of course, and tried to forget their existence.

The change that the years had wrought in Alison was a subtle one, in that it was a slow process of almost imperceptible gradations. She, herself, though gauging accurately the measure of her unhappiness, had no conception of the basic alteration in her character. From a girl with a tremendous capacity for living as spelt in terms of real love and companionship, she had become a woman whose bitterness increased and worked the more surely to her own unhappiness and cynicism as it was so carefully hidden from the eyes of the outside world. Society had sanctioned the marriage in the beginning and continued in its illusion that it had been a satisfactory one. Even Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd considered that Alison had chosen wisely and well. As for Toddy —well—Alison let him alone in his cups, and besides, there were the three little Toddies, a fine brood of Fitz-Herberts. What more could a man, even a Fitz-Herbert, demand?

So, the world all unknowing, Alison came into the full realization of the waste of her life and brooded bitterly on her mistake. She had thought much of Dick and snatched at every piece of news in regard to him. The marriage with Marjorie Cuthbert had never materialized. Alison wondered, but, deep down in her heart, was glad.

While living in Paris she had heard indirectly of the Ramsdells at Monte Carlo, and later on rumor placed Suzanne in London, Dick in Vienna. This last had brought Alison a question and a feeling of uneasiness. Then the Ramsdells had dropped, somehow, out of her ken. People no longer spoke of them, and she lacked the courage to ask. But Dick stood out always in her thoughts as her one lover.

In her varied career, in Paris particularly that first winter, there had been many men who would have played the rôle of admirer only too gladly to the charming young matron with the stupid husband. Alison had read their intentions easily and dismissed them kindly. She did not condemn. If she were faithful to Toddy it was not because of the morality involved, but because there was no one who happened to take her fancy.

As the years went by after the birth of her children, she realized more and more the emptiness of her virtue. It was the virtue that flourishes on dead desires and lacks the initiative to be anything else.

She brooded on this. She had deliberately foregone the best of life for money.

As she faced the future stretching out ahead of her, a dull monotony of days and nights, she felt a numbness creeping upon her that terrified her. It was almost as if some slow disease were fastening upon her and she was powerless to shake it off. She strained herself to meet social obligations, exhausted herself in one way or another, seeking to throw off that dreadful lethargy that lurked at every turn. She felt that she would be willing to sacrifice everything for one second's ability to feel as she had felt in her early love for Dick.

She found herself flirting with one or two of the men of her own set, but the affairs brought no satisfaction, only the badgering of an emotion she was incapable of getting in full force. Then she tried exploiting her son's tutor, a healthy young college boy living in the house. He did not even seem to recognize the fact of her advances. Discovering later his attentions to one of the house maids, an Irish girl with flaming hair, Alison summarily dismissed him.

The matter was a sickening one. Alison turned from it in disgust and with an accurate gauging of her own belittlement. She knew herself as sinking into the petty devices and stratagems upon which Amy Prescott thrived. But she didn't care; she

nursed a vindictiveness toward her husband and what he stood for of arrogant autocracy that she felt at times might prompt her to any folly. When she was in this mood a strange gleam would come into her eyes. She would seek Toddy out, sit and look at him in his drunkenness and get a satisfaction that had in it some thing of the sinister as she watched him and speculated on the possibility of bringing about the fall of the Fitz-Herbert tradition.

X

Circumstance played into Alison's hands. The Fitz-Herberts were again in Newport and the season had dragged half its weary length of garish festivity. Alison was bored and irritable; one of the children had been ill and Toddy had shown himself more trying and absurd than ever in his stupid worry.

"Don't be a fool," Alison had retorted to his incessant whine. "If there's a power that makes for righteousness, it won't cut off the eldest son of a Fitz-Herbert."

She could have laughed when she realized Toddy had taken her sarcasm seriously as an expression of her faith in a special Fitz-Herbert providence. The child didn't die, of course.

It was Toddy who broke the news one day at lunch that the Ramsdells were coming to Newport for the rest of the season.

"They've taken 'The Lodge'," he said.

Then when Alison made no response —"You remember Dick, don't you?"

He put on his monocle (he had affected that but recently) and fixed her with his listless stare.

"Perfectly," she said clearly. "I was very much in love with him once."

"Don't say," answered Toddy and dropped his eyes to his paper. His indifference goaded Alison to make a stand for her identity.

"I am so bored I could almost find it in my heart to renew our affair."

Toddy again fixed her with his monocle, and then twisted his lips into an odd smile.

"Feeling better, aren't you? Eh?" he ejaculated.

Alison's anger was the greater in that she felt herself worsted.

The Lodge was a small cottage directly next Fitz-Herbert Park. Alison dressed herself with care after luncheon and started out to tender a welcome to Suzanne. As she walked through the beautiful grounds of the estate that had sheltered so many of the Fitz-Herberts, she had a strange feeling of awe and apprehension. It was as if she were face to face with generations, each of which in passing had done its share to increase the loveliness of the place, as if the tradition of the family would gain strength and prove its indestructibility the more because of the beauty and wonder of this material manifestation of it. The day was partly cloudy and there seemed a brooding melancholy in the whisper of the wind in the great trees.

Alison paused for a minute by an old well, the relic of some forgotten Italian town buried in the heart of the Esterelles. She remembered afterwards noticing the deep grooves the rope had made in the curbing and thinking of the passage of years that had been necessary to produce them.

She was quite calm, yet with a feeling of finality as if the end of everything were at hand and her restless strivings were over. Dick had come back to her, out of the past. He was here, the lover of her youth, and she was his.

She breathed a tired sigh and leaned upon the well curb with closed eyes. Then, reluctantly, as if the thing awaiting her were too great to be taken without the intensity of preparation as for a sacrament, she roused herself and went on.

As she turned into the beech walk with its moss-covered flag stones, she was conscious of the figure of a man at a little distance. She stopped short, a quick pain in her heart. Then she found herself looking up at Dick

with both her hands held firmly in his.

It was all so sudden, so unexpected there was no chance for formulated action. Alison stood there looking up in the grey eyes that seemed to search hers for what the years had brought her.

Then with a rush all the pent-up emotion and sorrow that she had kept in abeyance so long overwhelmed her, and she found herself weeping bitterly in his arms.

There was no passion in the embrace, only a yearning for sympathy on the one side and a protecting tenderness on the other. They stood so a long time till Alison's tears were spent. Then smiling quietly, she drew away.

"I was on my way to see your mother. This is hardly the sort of preliminary—"

They seemed a little shy of each other now and Dick seemed abstracted in thought as he studied Alison's face.

"I'll take you there now—" he started to suggest.

But she shook her head.

"Ah, no! My eyes—"

Then with a smile— "You're just the same, Dick."

He looked at her keenly, then shook his head.

"No—the years are bound to do something to us."

She questioned him with her eyes but he did not explain. Some disquieting thought clouded his face. Then with a sigh that seemed to disperse all worry, he brightened, and putting his arms about her drew her to him. She submitted and her lips met his readily. If the kiss fell short of the ardour of their youthful passion, Alison did not know it, for the excitement and strange culmination of all her dreams produced in her an exhilaration that left her trembling and unstrung.

"Alison," Dick's voice was insistent now, and there seemed a grim determination in his words. "Meet me here, to-night. Some one might see us now —the gardeners—one of the men. But to-night—after dinner."

Alison closed her eyes. The pounding of the blood in her veins choked her voice and she could not speak. Again Dick drew her to him and kissed her. The tumult of joy and strange terror in her heart robbed her of all energy to respond to his embrace, and she lay quite passive in his arms.

They separated a minute later. That night as Alison dressed for dinner there was a glow in her eyes.

Toddy came into her room, a fairly unusual thing at that time of day.

"Did you see Suzanne?" he drawled.

Alison hesitated for an imperceptible second. Then "No" she said.

"Dick?' queried Toddy.

"No, they were both out. I left cards."

She answered lightly, and was surprised at the ready zest she took in the amplification of her lie.

Suzanne was called away from Newport the day after she had arrived, so that Alison did not see her. Her departure left Dick master of The Lodge, a fact which helped immensely in the arrangement of the rendezvous which eventually became so essential a part of Alison's life. The meetings at first were all happy reminiscence and tender confidence. Then in the exchange of broader views Alison surprised a cynicism in Dick she had never dreamed his open nature capable of.

It was evident the years had brought to him, too, a depth of experience, and this made his ready sympathy and quick response to her every mood the more wonderful. For as she was now, the love of an untried boy could not have satisfied; her most poignant need was for understanding from a creature who like herself had lived and learned. It was from the very vagueness and sketchiness of the account of his life that he gave her that Alison knew he had been down deep. She spoke of his mother. He turned a keen scrutiny upon her and then abruptly changed the subject. His bitterest awakening had been there, she judged.

But there was, in spite of this suggestion of hardness and disillusion in Dick, the same lovable charm that

made intimacy with him a dangerous thing. The end was inevitable, of course. Alison had deliberately not faced what was coming, but when she found herself involved, she gave herself up to the affair with the abandon of desperation that was prompted as much by the animosity she had fostered in her soul for her husband as by any great force of desire. But she did not realize this. As she and Dick met and loved day by day, she thought herself in the grip of passion in comparison with which everything else was as nothing.

Their meetings were carefully contrived, however, so that they managed to keep up a certain decency of appearance before the world. At the Casino, the beach, there were always other people there; at dances they avoided any appearance of intimacy. Toddy entertained Dick at dinner or on his yacht time and again, and apparently liked having him about. Alison felt no guilt when she saw the two together, only a certain satisfaction at her success in tricking one so snugly secure.

It was in the presence of others that Alison took the opportunity to study her lover. She realized as time went on that he had changed. The grey eyes held a reserve that provoked speculation as to its origin; the slight stoop of the figure argued a partial surrender to the years. He was less buoyant, not as one who has lost his vigor but as one who has learned the necessity of conservation and is wise enough to refine his strength and economize in its expenditure. He slipped easily back into his old popularity with men and women alike. As Alison watched him she had a strange little thrill of possession that merged into an unreasonable jealousy every time she found him smiling at some pretty woman. She knew her jealousy as absurd, but she spent many bitter hours as a result.

As time went on she found herself growing restive; to be forever contriving stolen meetings became irksome. She wanted to throw off restraint, defy the world and the Fitz-Herberts, flaunt her possession of Dick before all those other women who seemed lurking everywhere to entrap him with their wiles. And she wanted to do something heroic to prove to Dick her appreciation of his unselfish devotion. For he thought of her always first. When she went to him tired and irritable, he tempered his kisses and soothed her as one would a child.

He felt that he put a check on his passion so as not to frighten her. The restraint he imposed on their relationship she took as a subtle tribute and expression of the high value he set upon what she was giving him. Had he been more prodigal she would have considered he held her more lightly.

The end of the season found her with a grim determination to throw over her husband and everything he stood for and to cast in her lot openly with Dick. For, after all, what mattered the money and the luxury? What mattered anything in the world but just their love?

She went to him one night at The Lodge. The final decision to act definitely had come as a result of many things. There had been a trying scene with Toddy, something absurd about one of the children. Then Mrs. Prescott had called and in the softest of tones had given forth a little gossip that had put Alison at once on the defensive.

"Mrs. Cameron—of course she's nobody. You remember her, Alison, she was at that fête the other day at the Nicols'—large and blonde. Of course she's rolling in money—saucepans, I think it is—or, wait a minute, bee's wax, that's it. Well, she's mad about Dick—"

The gossip had entered in.

Alison realized the end of her endurance had been reached.

She found Dick waiting for her at The Lodge. The September night was cool and there was a fire crackling in the fireplace at the end of the long lounge. A divan drawn up in front invited comfortably, and Alison felt a strange yearning for the simple rest

and contentment it seemed to symbolize. Just that and Dick was what she wanted.

He drew her cloak off, then seeing she was trembling with excitement, "What is it, dear?" he asked kindly.

"I—have a headache," she faltered. Then with a rush of emotion— "Oh, I can't stand it—I can't stand it any longer," she cried. "Take me away—take me away."

He looked his surprise, then drew her gently down beside him.

"Isn't all this enough?" he asked.

But she would not listen. "The Fitz-Herberts! How I hate them all! I want to get away. I want to hurt them. And I want *you*."

He smiled at the complexity of her motives.

"Alison," he said, "we must think."

"If Toddy would divorce me," she faltered.

This brought him a new thought.

"Ah! I hadn't thought of that." He rose and began pacing up and down in front of her.

"I could force him," she went on excitedly as she watched him, "threaten a scandal if he refused."

Her face showed bright with the radiance of this idea that opened up a future of happy security. "We could live abroad."

She rose now and faced him, a great pleading in her eyes. They stood so a minute.

Then Dick's hesitation broke to an enthusiasm that matched her own. He took both her hands in his.

"By Jove, Alison—manage Toddy properly and—"

He followed the trend of his thought for a minute and Alison watched with joy the doubt in his eyes settle into a placid satisfaction. Then he drew her into his arms and held her in close embrace while he kissed her. She sighed a little. The warmth of his lips always brought her a strange languor. But tonight it brought, too, the realization of how tired she was. She drew away.

"We must talk," she said. "There is much to settle."

He gave in as he always did to her every mood. They seated themselves on the divan. Dick propped her up with pillows and settled her comfortably. Then, noticing that the fire had waned, he got up and threw on a log or two.

"Already," he said with a laugh as he sank beside her again. "Now for business."

But the business resolved itself simply into a happy speculation as to the life they would live together, each outdoing the other in enthusiasm and happy suggestion. All details as to how things should be managed escaped them in the contentment they seemed to take in each other's presence.

Alison rose at last with a great sigh.

"It is time to go," she said. Then with a whisper, "This has been the happiest night of my life."

Toddy was still in the dining-room at the table when she returned home. She sat down opposite and allowed herself to get him in the full force of the brilliant chandelier. The years had not been kind to Toddy. It would seem that the fringe of damp colorless hair had been spared him for the malignant purpose of accentuating his baldness, and that the excess of weight but called the attention the more to the greenish pallor of his countenance. He was sodden with drink; but Alison was still haunted at times by the feeling as in the days before her marriage that underneath there *was* something.

He blinked at her now and pushed a bottle towards her. She shook her head, then realizing suddenly the ebb of her vitality, changed her mind and poured out a glass of wine. They sat there a long time looking at each other, Toddy inscrutable, Alison obviously brooding.

At last Toddy broke the stillness.

"What's the matter?" he asked in a thick voice.

Alison braced herself.

"You know why I married you, of course," she said clearly.

"Fitz-Herbert money," he muttered and nodded knowingly.

"Yes," said Alison. "Well—I've learned my lesson. Money doesn't count."

She was gazing thoughtfully in the depths of her wine glass as she spoke. Looking up suddenly she surprised an expression of cunning in her husband's eyes. She started nervously.

"Is that what *he* says?" Toddy spoke quite distinctly this time.

Alison remained perfectly still, wide-eyed. It was as if some dread loathsome thing were about to fasten upon her and she was suddenly deprived of all force of resistance. She moved her lips but no sound came.

"Is that what *he* says?" repeated Toddy, this time with insistence.

Again she struggled to answer. This time words came, but disconnected—incoherent—barely articulate.

Toddy caught the word "divorce" and cut in on her.

"How much alimony does he want?" He said it stupidly, but the suggestion was unmistakable and brought Alison to her feet with a sharp cry.

She stood there breathing heavily with her hand on her heart. But the glow of anger in her eyes faded out on the second of its flare and she felt suddenly sick. She sank into her seat again with a gasp.

"I wouldn't take a cent," she muttered, and looked away almost furtively as if to escape the brute conviction her husband's dull eyes were forcing upon her. Alimony! The word had entered into her consciousness and left its taint. Already she felt it spreading, eating out her faith in her lover.

She caught herself up.

"How did you know?" she asked with a quick change of thought.

Toddy helped himself to more wine. "Mrs. Prescott, in the first place."

"Oh!" Alison pressed her hand to her forehead.

"I would have known, anyway. Suzanne's going away was enough," he continued imperturbably.

"Suzanne?" The pain in Alison's eyes was deep and her voice trembled.

"Yes—it was, of course, a put-up job. Dick got mixed up with his father in Vienna and they're down and out. *You* promised to be fair spoil."

Alison closed her eyes. A few tears trickled slowly down the dead white of her face.

"As you proved to be," continued Toddy imperturbably. "However, I doubt if Dick intended to marry you. *You*, probably, forced that issue."

Alison again sprang to her feet.

"It's a lie—a lie," she cried. "I love him and he—he loves me!" But her voice broke at that with her lack of conviction.

Her husband followed up his advantage.

"Lover or future husband—a detail, after all. He's been running up bills all over town on the security—"

Alison gazed with a fascinated horror into her huband's eyes, and as she looked all doubt as to the sordid truth of her lover's motives was dissipated in a sick despair. His last words uttered but a few minutes before as he kissed her good-bye and wrapped her tenderly in her cloak echoed in her mind as the last proof necessary to the support of the truth.

"Handle Toddy carefully, won't you, dear?" She knew now all too surely what he had meant.

She smiled bitterly, but strange to say there was no resentment in her heart against him. For the image of the hard, calculating man who had tricked her blurred, even as she sat confronting the fact of his treachery, into that of the eager boy she had sent away six years before, pleading for love. "Nothing in the world matters but just love." She had wrought his disillusion then as he was working hers now. There was a sardonic irony in the nice justice of it. A wave of emotion suddenly swept her. It was not pain nor protest but a wild burst of hatred for the smug impregnability of the man across from her, gloating in his drunkenness over her dumb misery. She roused herself

to make one more effort to hurt him.

"You realize, of course, that he *has* been my lover—"

"Perfectly."

Again anger seized her and, trembling, she clutched the edge of the table.

"That I've gone to him day by day —that I've met him at night when you were asleep drunk—that I've—"

Again that look of evil cunning she had surprised before flashed into his eyes.

"I understand—perfectly," he said, and relapsed into his dull apathy. She felt it the more maddening now in that she realized the full strength of the cunning it hid.

She rose unsteadily and went to the fireplace. Toddy followed her. She met his stupid stare in the glass over the mantel with the loathing that came to her always when in close physical contact with him. She closed her eyes for a second.

Then with a last flare of defiance.

"Suppose I did demand alimony."

"I'd give it to you without a question," Toddy answered. "But I doubt when he'd had time to think it over if he'd marry you even with the alimony—"

In answer to the question that startled in her eyes, he indicated the mirror.

Then for the first time she got herself in the full light of disillusion. The face that looked back at her was haggard and lined, in the eyes was a sullen despair.

In a flash there came to her the boredom Dick had so cunningly concealed in the restraint she had read as deference, and she cowered pitifully, putting up her hands to shut out the vision of her faded youth. But her husband seized her by the wrists and forced her again to face the image in the glass. This time as she looked, resignation, the passive acceptance of the inevitable, seemed to settle on the features, dulling them to an apathetic stupidity.

She turned away, only to meet the drunken embrace of the man beside her.

"The Fitz-Herbert tradition," he muttered thickly as he forced her to him.

THE WHEEL OF LIFE

By Harry Kemp

COME out into the hilltops,
Whom life has tossed and torn—
The stars' supreme derision
Will laugh your love to scorn;

You'll feel the earth roll under
As it goes down through space;
The moon, a world that perished,
Will shine against your face—

Where men, like you, grown bitter
From love's unending woe,
Walked sadly in the starlight
Ten million years ago.

MA SOEUR

By E. Belding Beach

MY sister is everything that I am not. She never scratches matches on the pink brocade paper in the drawing-room to light her cigarettes. She never drives a motor car over twenty miles an hour, or drinks more than one cocktail. She goes to church because she likes to hear the little pop-eyed, raucous-voiced minister speak. He irritates my sense of heavenly things.

My sister objects to young men hanging about the house who have no serious intentions. She hates mongrel dogs who enjoy hiding choice bones in her tulip bed, and fuzzy caterpillars that waddle like the dragon in "Siegfried." She approves of nice-mannered children who fairly reek with the veneer of politeness. I adore the lyrical-eyed Neapolitan gamins with the grimy faces who splash merrily under hydrants on street corners.

My sister likes banana salad, and artichokes, and chop suey, and potatoes *au gratin,* but cares nothing for rum *au Kirsch.* She does not enthuse over love stories and thinks I am silly to weep at the sad endings.

My sister is married. I am not.

WE WERE ALONE

By June Gibson

WE were alone.

All day long I had waited for his coming.

He recited poetry to me softly and told me that he preferred my dull blonde hair and lavender eyes to a piquant brunette's flashing black eyes and crimson mouth.

We heard soft music in the distance.

We talked about love.

Suddenly the lights went out.

We were alone.

All day long I had waited for his coming. . . .

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "I have a match."

THE WORDS THAT KILLED JOHN HADLEY

By L. M. Hussey

I

THEY found John Hadley, dressed in beautifully tailored evening clothes, immaculate as always, but quite dead. And he had done the thing with a singular and inexplicable carelessness for the side of his head where the bullet had penetrated was quite blackened with soot and the side from which it had emerged was inelegantly disfigured. The undertaker had some trouble to lay him out presentably.

Here was a man from whom his friend John Morton, the popular short story writer, had drawn at least a dozen yarns. Of the same kind he could have furnished twice as many more. The twenty-five years he had lived since his expulsion from college had been characterized by one affair after another.

It was a pity he himself had never felt the impulse to write. He could have done a Decameron out of his own experiences—that is, a Decameron told by Dioneo. He had known tender women, weeping women, bold women, women with red hair and women who were fat. And the last woman he knew was scarcely a woman at all; a girl actually, a little yearning girl with a round face and big eyes and really not much personality. And yet this commonplace little creature pronounced upon John Hadley a dreadful and distressing doom.

But like every ultimate cause, other causes went before. Without the preexistence of these first events, the disastrous words that little yearning girl spoke to John Hadley would have been innocuous and silly.

Without going back too far, or becoming too technical—you might read Metchnikoff's "Scientific Study of Old Age"—it may be pointed out that in the spring of that direful year John Hadley had felt an uncomfortable kink in his legs. . . .

Ah! The tragedy of phagocytosis! The kink persisted, intensified if anything. John Hadley consulted his physician.

The doctor of physic recognized an acid diathesis and prescribed lithia water, salicylic acid and the Bulgarian bacillus. In short, and to make it plainer, John Hadley had, for the first time in his life, a mild attack of rheumatism.

Perhaps, had the leisure been his to think about it, that visitation to his limbs might have taken on a premonitory dreadfulness. But after all, the habit of Hadley's thought was otherwise and his time was very much taken up with Mrs. Bertha Howard, a blonde woman of much experience.

Probably her very experience took away early the savour of the affair. At twenty-three to have known a woman of this sophistication would have flattered and thrilled John Hadley. But at forty-eight, although he never realized years as factor, a desire for the more simple feminine came over him.

They parted with an undignified rumpus—a vulgar matter of a cheque. Bertha had sniffed at it and in a sudden pique, John Hadley exclaimed

"Not a cent more, Bertha! It seems

to me I've done pretty well by you already."

Mrs. Howard coloured suddenly with anger and took the cheque between her fingers with a preliminary gesture of tearing. However, it was an impulse only, without any imprudent culmination, for she slipped the paper into the drawer of her dressing table.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"It seems to me," she said, "we're tired of each other."

"Yes, I think we are," said Hadley.

"I know," she went on, almost as if he had not spoken, "that I'm frightfully tired of you."

"Then good-bye!" he exclaimed, and strode for the door.

"Yes, good-bye, Old Thing," she called, and turned to her mirror.

Hadley went out, his aplomb unusually shaken. It was some minutes before he perceived that he was walking fiercely and ridiculously, without any objective. He slackened his pace and pointed his steps toward his club, but he still held a furrow between his eyes.

The woman had been confoundedly annoying! He was an ass, Hadley mused, to have mixed himself up with her. She had even gone to the vulgar length of calling him an insulting name. He lighted a cigarette with a gesture of irritation. However—it meant nothing. . . .

It was then that Hadley thought most definitely of young maidens, sweet little things who shivered when they swallowed a cocktail and were too unsophisticated to know just the point to laugh when Hadley recited one of his favourite *contes*.

In those moments he realized that he hadn't sat across the table from such a piquant demureness for—Heavens! could it be years! Well—a devilish long time!

What in the name of the Good Little Man had he been doing with his time? He determined to mend his singular error without further delay.

But, unluckily, it was a good resolve without the consummation of the immediate action he contemplated. The accursed kinks in his legs possessed him suddenly like malignant spirits of darkness, and Hadley was laid up in bed and cotton batting for two weeks.

He had plenty of unwelcome leisure then to think of many things, but he preferred the alleviating thoughts of his next prospected flirtation.

He was rather indifferent to her type. That made his contemplation the more felicitous for he played with a dozen pictures of young girlhood. He passed through imaginary encounters with dark-eyed maids and then encounters with the blue-eyed variety, and he had them a comfortable arm-full and he also had them beautiful and serpentine. Indeed, his thoughts doubtless contributed to an early recovery, and John Hadley walked out on the street at last, feeling better than his affliction had permitted for many months.

He had thought of ways and means and had finally determined that the more casual the meeting, the better. A smile on the street and his hat lifted . . . that was the way!

II

It was a very pleasant and sunny afternoon when he undertook the initiation of his enterprise. Hadley carried a cane and walked with only a barely perceptible stiffness. He watched the faces of the women who passed. Once a stout creature with carmined cheeks grinned at him. He looked through her, and went on.

After perhaps ten minutes, Hadley saw a little loveliness whom he immediately perceived was one of his ideals. He smiled.

She turned her face to the side, and passed him with a quickened step!

That disconcerted him a little. He considered. No doubt he had not approached her in the right manner. He was quite a little rusty in the handling of that sort. He decided that he had given too much the impression of the *roué*—the next time he would be more

disarming, would smile with a greater ingenuousness and benignity.

. . . She came walking along like a flower out of the fields. Her summery garments rested on her like morning mists on a garden.

Hadley saw, and was enraptured. He smiled.

The girl rested her eyes on his face for a startled second, her expressions wavered—and then her lips curved and dimples came in her cheeks.

Hadley's hat was in his hand.

"How do you do!" he exclaimed. "I really didn't expect to see you here. And isn't it a perfectly ripping afternoon?"

The eyes of the girl had not left Hadley's face. One might have said she was studying his features, although this did not occur to Hadley. He was taken up with elation. She was indubitably one of the little creatures he had imagined. He approved of the sweep of her brown hair imprisoning the tips of her ears and turning up again under her little toque. He liked her large, brown eyes and the small, round face that displayed the stamp of nothing save innocence.

"Shall we stroll?" he was asking. "Or would you like a spin? My car isn't far from here."

He had taken her arm and they were moving very hesitantly past the shops and the people.

"No, no!" she exclaimed, and dragged a little. "I mustn't!"

"Mustn't? Why not? A little spin out to the fresh air, eh?"

"I'd . . . I'd love to. . . ."

"Decided then!"

To this she said nothing. Hadley knew well enough that this demure little creature was unused to the company of strange men and more so to the pretense of having known *him* previously. He recognized her uneasy embarrassment and sought to interest her with his conversation without putting upon her the strain of frequent replies. They had slowly covered, perhaps, another block when the girl halted abruptly, pulling at his arm.

"I can't!" she exclaimed.

"Can't? What—"

"I mustn't. Not today. You can take me some other day, can't you? You won't be offended, will you?"

"But . . . confound it, I never can remember your name. . . ."

"Beulah," she murmured.

"But, Beulah! What is the matter? A ripping day like this! Just the sort of a day to—"

"I know. But I mustn't. Some other day!"

Hadley felt vastly disappointed but deemed it better not to press the point to a possibly serious strain. He was resourceful. He understood the psychology of refusal. This refusal made the acceptance of some alternative the more certain.

"A cup of tea, then," he said. "We'll drop in one of these places and have a little chat."

She didn't really accept his proposal in words but with an assumption of her assent Hadley rather pushed her through the doors of a tea room and then followed her to a table.

They then sat opposite each other, sipping, and nibbling on the *petits fours* brought them and talking—that is, Hadley was for the most part talking.

It is not necessary to record his monologue. He told her whimsical and bland little tales while she watched him with her immense eyes almost like a neophyte watching an oracle.

She seemed indeed to find a vast interest in Hadley's physiognomy. Once, dropping her eyes, he saw her sigh. In the midst of his conversation, which was delivered with facile fluency, he began to wonder. Was the little thing really taken with him? She might indeed be flattered. And had she sighed—could it be amourously?

After a time he questioned her about herself. She was not particularly confidential. But she told him some things.

"I am alone so much of the time," she said. "Since . . . since father died. . . ."

"Ah. . . ." Hadley breathed, sympathetically.

"Father and I were such pals. I never knew mother. I was too young when . . ."

"Poor little Beulah! But we'll be pals, eh? Have any number of jolly times together!"

She raised her eyes, moist now and most lustrous and looked again earnestly at his face. Hadley ventured just to touch the tips of her fingers with his own, as her hands lay inertly on the table; a momentary, reassuring pressure.

"You're kind," she barely murmured.

The delicate business was progressing famously!

But like a gazelle, she presently took fright.

"Oh! It's getting late!" she cried. "You must let me go now. You can see me more some other day!"

Hadley did not demur. He was satisfied with his progress. She had promised to let him drive her in his speedster the next afternoon. He pressed her hand warmly at parting. She would not let him take her home.

III

YES, John Hadley, not at all cognizant at this time of the kinks in his legs, was elated. The subconscious mind has a vicious habit of telling itself the truth and leaving the shams and salves to the conscious intelligence. Back in Hadley's head had been a fear which he had never admitted in conscious thought. But he had really been afraid. So long a time had passed since he had attempted to attract the innocent type that little Beulah represented! There had really been his inner and unspoken doubts. Perhaps the kinks in his legs had shaken his intimate assurance a little. But with Beulah he was unquestionably succeeding. It promised to be a most fresh and delicious little flirtation. Hadley thought of her small, sweet mouth. It would be like pressing his lips on little, warm flowers! He twirled his cane and felt the systole of his heart and a youthful surge.

How she had kept her eyes upon his face!

The next afternoon they drove out of the city and followed one of the Long Island roads. Another day of sunshine. Hadley sat at the wheel, taking the deep breaths of a boy and acutely conscious of the fragrant Beulah pressing against his arm.

They drew up on a little elevation to get a view of a spread of fields, and cottages, like white temples set among the trees. Beulah, still shy, was nevertheless not quite so much the startled faun.

"Jolly picture, eh?" asked Hadley.

"Ah!" she breathed. "I *do* feel good! I get so lonely. . . ."

"You won't be lonely now, will you . . . dear?"

She took no exception to his endearment.

"You're awfully kind," she whispered.

"And isn't that natural? Such a dear little girl!"

Hadley closed his fingers over her hand and she did not withdraw it. She turned her head and once more her great eyes searched his face. He had determined that her expression meant fascination and he experienced something of a thrill.

"You know you are a dear little girl, don't you?" he asked her.

"You're awfully good," she repeated, and he saw her brown eyes soften and drop a little.

They were quite alone there on the top of the little hill, and Hadley drew her, still holding her soft, warm hand, closer to him and he leaned in his seat toward her. Her face was uplifted, her lids lowered, like the countenance of a nun in prayer, and Hadley, moving just a few inches, kissed her parted lips.

She did not stir. He felt no tremor in the hand he clasped. Her eyes opened again and looked into his own. Hadley could not be mistaken, he saw it plainly; the look she gave him was loving!

Somehow, he hadn't expected quite this. It stirred him, it shook him up

a little. They looked at each other in silence.

Beulah was the first to speak.

"We must go back," she said.

"Not so soon," he objected.

"Please!" She touched his arm a moment in a pretty gesture of supplication.

"You know," she went on, "I'm not just quite used to being with you yet. It seems a little strange. I've been so much alone. . . . But I love to be with you! But take me back now, won't you?"

Hadley tried no more to resist her. He threw in the clutch and they started.

"That collection of old china I was telling you about," he said to her. "When will you let me show it to you?"

"Some day. . . ."

Hadley laughed.

"You're a definite little thing!"

"When I get a little more used to *us*," she appended.

IV

He parted from her the second time and with the agreement that he could see her again in a very few days. He went to his apartments in such a condition of recrudescence and elation that his man had to remind him that he had quite neglected to take his five grains of sodium salicylate at the proper time. He swallowed the stuff, but decided that he was about through with the difficulty and would probably drop it the next day.

In the evening, with nothing definite on hand, Hadley thought of his club, but the notion had no intriguing prospects. He decided to stay at home, smoke a little, and give himself up to pleasant thoughts. He had not had such pleasant thoughts for years!

His revery dealt considerably in self congratulation. After all, he was an unusual man! He thought of his compeers. How many of them could attract, and as suddenly as he had done, little Beulah? Why, by gad! they were nothing but old duffers. Whereas—

He was startled out of his musing when his man, knowing his ways, announced her, and little Beulah herself was shyly standing just inside the door!

Of course, John Hadley was astonished. But he exhibited none of his surprise, save as a cordial enthusiasm.

"Well!" he exclaimed.

"What can you think of me?" she asked.

"I think you're the dearest . . ." he began.

She laughed a little.

"You know well enough what I mean," she said. "It's really awful of me to come here. But I simply got the notion and I felt so lonely, I couldn't resist. You won't think badly of me, will you?"

"Beulah!" he admonished. "You couldn't suppose that, could you?"

She smiled at him, rapturously.

"Oh! You're just a dear!" she cried. "I knew you wouldn't. And now you can show me your collection."

"Certainly! But let's sit down a moment. I feel like talking to you first! I only saw you this afternoon, but really, little sweetheart, it's been years!"

He took her hands and she tilted back her head. Actually she was inviting his kiss! He pressed his lips over hers and she pulled away, laughing.

"Now let's talk," she said.

Hadley pulled up another chair and reseated himself. But Beulah ignored the chair he had provided and dropped, like a bending blossom, on his lap. She put her arms about his shoulders and cuddled her head on his breast.

"Ah!" she breathed. "It's wonderful to have a pal again!"

"Again?" Hadley was disturbed.

"Yes; poor dad and I were such pals. When I first saw you I was startled, you reminded me so much of dad. You have the same kind eyes. And dad was affectionate, just as you are. I watched your face. I thought,

'can it be true?' And it is! I've found a father again! You'll be my dear, old father, won't you?"

John Hadley pushed her from his lap. He got up and walked from the room. A vicious kink assailed his legs. He stepped into his bed-room.

Dear Old Father!!

So he reached for the drawer of his chiffonier.

For those were the words that killed John Hadley!

ON SEEING A NUN IN A TAXICAB

By Charles Hanson Towne

LITTLE sister, did you know,
When I saw you through the glass of the cab,
That your life held as great contrasts
As the lives of deposed kings and czars?
One moment, a lonely cell;
Then this sudden projection into flaming Fifth Avenue!
How strange the street must have seemed to you,
Little white sister, sitting there so still!

I was in a 'bus,
And at Forty-second street the traffic halted us,
Side by side, and I could almost have touched you.
I peered into your privacy,
Like the fool that I was,
And I felt ashamed of myself
When I saw in your hands a rosary.
Your lips were moving,
And I turned away.

When you reached your destination,
I still wonder, unworldly little sister,
If you realized that even you
Were expected to tip the chauffeur!

SWEETHEART: a woman who is, wants to be, has been, isn't, hopes to be, dares not be, would die to be, married.

WOMEN, to men, are either wheelbarrows or Theda Baras.

PORTRAIT OF A GENTLEMAN IN THE EVENING

By Henry W. Seaman

HE wore a coat of sombre hue and fantastic cut, that matched but ill his somewhat portly and, let it be said, prosaic figure. It fitted him, I suppose, yet this appeared not to be necessary, so strangely shaped it was, so unexpected in outline, with corners sticking out at awkward places. How shall I tell you of that weird coat, that seemed not to belong to him, yet seemed to mark him as one of a certain kind of men, as a badge marks a tribe?

Seen from behind, it was long; from in front, short. It hung from the shoulders. It was of some soft black stuff; not shiny, but of a certain rich sheen. At the waist—or, more clearly, for there was uncertainty concerning the waist, about midway between the extreme top and the extreme bottom of the coat—a curious thing happened. Instead of continuing straight down, as one would expect of a coat, it branched off at either side; or rather, it was cut off abruptly, as if the tailor, suddenly lacking material, had changed his plan.

This circumstance intrigued me, and he must have seen that I was staring at him. But there were other engaging mysteries to attract me, and from his middle my eyes wandered to the buttons on the coat. They were not, as you would think, of a color in contrast to that of the coat. They were black, like the coat, and that is why I had not noticed them at first. But the buttons answered their own question. It puzzled me to know what use they had, and to this day I cannot tell you.

You will hardly believe me when I tell you that there were no buttonholes, and that if there were they could not have been used. For even if the coat were elastic, I am sure that it could never stretch across his stomach. This helped my theory that the tailor was short of material, but it did not bring me any nearer to a solution of the problem of why he wore this coat—he who had money to buy many coats if he chose.

His apparent wealth answered also the supposition that the buttons had once been of use, and that his girth had outgrown the coat. It was new.

I have said that it hung from the shoulders. Let me qualify this. At the back it hung straight down, as ordinary coats do, but in front there was a queer variation. It seemed that a strip of shiny silk had been imposed upon the cloth. This strip went around the neck and hung down in front like a priest's stole, dwindling to nothing just above the buttons, which, by the way, were six.

Between the two ends of this stole there was a white expanse, perhaps twelve inches across, wide at the top and very narrow at the bottom, although a strip of white at each side, just below the two places where the tailor had left off, showed that underneath the coat there was much more of this white stuff.

I cannot tell you more about this, for I was only beginning to examine it when the man again became aware of my presence. He scowled at me and turned on his heel.

Then I saw the most amazing thing

of all. As he strode away, up the steps leading to the house, I caught a glimpse of the symmetrical, yet fantastic fashioning of the back of the coat. I can tell you only that it was perplexingly bifurcated, with pleats hanging down from the middle, and at the tops of the pleats were—you will hardly credit this, I am afraid—two buttons.

And not a button-hole in sight!

DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE GOD?

By Christopher Morley

ACROSS the court there rises the back wall
Of the Magna Carta Apartments.
The other evening the people in the apartment opposite
Had forgotten to draw their curtains.
I could see them dining: the well-balanced cloth,
The silver and glass, the crystal water jug,
The meat and vegetables; and their clean pink hands
Outstretched in busy gesture.

It was pleasant to watch them, they were so human;
So gay, innocent, unconscious of scrutiny.
They were four: an elderly couple,
A young man; and a girl—with lovely shoulders
Mellow in the glow of the lamp.
They were sitting over coffee, and I could see their hands talking.

At last the older two left the room.
The boy and girl looked at each other. . . .
Like a flash, they leaned and kissed.

Good old human race that keeps on multiplying!
A little later I went down the street to the movies,
And there I saw all four, laughing and joking together.
And as I watched them I felt like God—
Benevolent, all-knowing, and tender.

MARRIAGE: an eloquent and pessimistic manner in which to express one's contempt for happiness.

EVERY woman is half saint and half vampire. It all depends which half.

THE WISEST GIRL IN TOWN

By Thyra Samter Winslow

I

IN New York there are a lot of girls who know a thing or two. Mostly, the knowledge has been pounded into them ungently, by hammer blows of contacts with unlovely things, by ugly, unavoidable experiences. The girl who stays at home doesn't know things like these. Life filters through to her sweet tasting, pleasantly colored. She can take out her unchanging ideals, polish them off and have them ready for use at a moment's notice. To the girl who works in public places, life comes rough-edged. She is not asked if she understands things—sees things with a true vision. Experiences are given to her. She must accept things in her own way. She knows a thing or two.

The cashier knows pettiness, little lyings, little cheatings, little grafts. The chorus girl knows of vanity, of thinly-plated emotions, of easy luxuries. The saleswoman knows of flattery, pretension, snobbery. The public stenographer in a big hotel knows and sees most of all. She is the wisest girl in town.

Aurella Burns was a public stenographer at The Metropolitan. The Metropolitan is any one of a half-dozen hotels on Broadway, between Thirtieth and Fiftieth streets, a new hotel, with an imposing exterior and an interior glittering with friezes, decorated in what we are pleased to call "the Louis Fifteenth style," and redolent of near-Oriental sachets and cigarettes.

The Metropolitan is patronized equally by out-of-town buyers and by in-town actors, by women traveling alone, and by women with their husbands, or with those to whom they have no legal right. The Metropolitan is neither as exclusive nor as expensive as the hotels on Fifth Avenue, but it, in turn, draws its skirts away — and decidedly — from those ordinary enough to be on Sixth. The Metropolitan is middle-class grandeur.

Aurella Burns' desk was on the mezzanine floor, near the railing. On the floor with her were two other public stenographers. There were also couches and chairs and desks, the latter stocked with Metropolitan Hotel stationery, elaborately monogrammed, convenient for loiterers, wasters of time, idlers, to attend to their correspondence if they wished, without the aid of any stenographer. Here, Aurella saw innumerable meetings, sordid flirtations, engagements made and broken. Bits of conversation floated to her, as she sat at her desk transcribing letters or reading.

Looking over the railing, on her right, nearly the whole of the lower floor of the hotel stretched out before Aurella's eyes: an entrance with a stolid, heavy doorman, impolite, grafting carriage starters and chauffeurs loitering near; double rows of elevators with ignorant, indifferent elevator boys; the big, pretentious lobby, full of men who roomed in cheap lodging-houses, unknown vaudeville performers, petty politicians, women surreptitiously or openly powdering their noses and glancing at the clock, waiting or pretending to wait for someone, a very few real hotel patrons, occasionally a celebrity, over-conscious of his hard-won notoriety; farther down, the hotel desks, with the long counters for registering and for infor-

mation, suave clerks, studiedly polite.

All of this Aurella knew. All of it she accepted. And, as life gave her this, it gave her a philosophy to wrap around herself. This philosophy has been expressed differently by different philosophers in forms that Aurella would not have recognized. Simplest to her, it was expressed in "what difference does it all make, anyhow?"

Aurella was twenty-three, a twenty-three that is just starting to bloom, a slender, well-groomed, smoothly coiffured, correctly rouged twenty-three. To Aurella, wearing the wrong kind of shoes was a greater crime than breaking the easiest broken commandments. Ignorance of correct slang, current plays, new gossip was vastly greater than ignorance of all languages, histories and arts. You could know nothing to make up for not knowing how to order a dinner. "Smartness" was the thing that counted.

Yet, in spite of these things, there was something rather fine about Aurella. She would have been furious with you if you had spoken to her about it, though her air of hauteur, of superiority, her cultivated accent, did not make for confidence. She was glossed over with hotel atmosphere.

II

Howard Grant was in love with Aurella. He was not the first who had been in love with her. Having someone in love with her was of no consequence. Aurella would look over the men who fell in love, weigh them as to their ability to provide, their good looks, their modernity—and then turn them down. None had, as yet, been quite approved. For Aurella had learned how easy it is to attract men when you are twenty-three and good-looking and men are numerous. She realized that when you're married you're married—for a while, anyhow, and she didn't want to make a mistake. Of course, if she really fell in love . . . Aurella's philosophy included love—if you fell in love, you yielded to it. If you could, you got married. If not—you took love as you found it. What difference did it make? It was all just a part of living, wasn't it? So far, love had not come to Aurella.

Howard Grant was in love with Aurella. Aurella was not quite able to get rid of him as she did her other suitors. Hauteur, hints, turn-downs were of no avail. Aurella saw Howard Grant every day. She really liked him—but to love him—and marry him—the very idea of it! For Howard Grant was poor. When Aurella married, she wanted something—position or money or Romance. But Howard Grant . . .

Howard Grant was a hotel clerk at The Metropolitan. He was one of the polite, icily impersonal young men who allowed you to register, when there were vacancies, who shoved the register a fraction of an inch toward you, who waved vaguely toward the pens, just as if they really would write, who looked suspiciously at your signature as if he were quite sure it were a forgery or a pseudonym, but preferred to say nothing about it for the present, who accepted your cigars and who called an indifferent bell-boy to take your luggage to your room, without listening to your description of what you had hoped the room might be like.

But, back of Howard's suave manner, his indifference, his sleeked hair, his lifted eyebrows, was an unbelievably kind heart. He was awfully fond of Aurella and nursed dreams about a four-room apartment, not higher up than One Hundred and Tenth Street, with Aurella cooking meals in a kitchenette, or even a maid doing the cooking for her. And every week, excepting the weeks that Aurella allowed him to spend most of his salary on her, Howard made a deposit in a savings bank. It was quite large enough now to furnish the apartment and have some left to encourage further savings. Howard even had a vague idea about "getting out of the hotel business" or rising to greater heights in it—and he kept one ear always slightly perked for tips on how to succeed.

Aurella and Howard went to theaters together—usually on tickets given by press-agents — and later to really "smart" restaurants, the ones that had just opened, and pointed out to each other all of the well-known New Yorkers and told anecdotes about them. They liked the same musical comedy stars and feature films, read the same serial stories in the magazines—spoke the same language generally. Aurella might even have listened more tolerantly to Howard's lovemaking if it hadn't been for her Philosophy of Life.

Not that she called it that, of course. But Aurella didn't want to settle down in a four-room apartment. She wanted to have Adventures. She wanted to Do Things, See Things, Live! Aurella wanted some man to fall madly in love with her, surround her with wonderful gifts, fight wildly for her possession, then take her away—to a land where it is always summer, where she could wear chiffon draperies and he could write poetry about her. Or she wanted to break up a home—run away with some other woman's husband, anything, as long as it was Life.

Aurella wouldn't have admitted this, of course. Aurella wouldn't have admitted anything. From ten in the morning to six at night, Aurella sat at her desk on the mezzanine floor of The Metropolitan, indifferent, disdainful, watchful, cool. With slim fingers she took down letters dictated by commercial travelers and ministers, fight managers and taxi drivers. She accepted tips graciously, loftily. She accepted presents perhaps a shade more warmly. Sometimes, if the invitor and the invitation were especially agreeable, she accepted invitations to dinner and to the theater. No one tried to get fresh with Aurella, not very fresh, anyhow. Aurella was a working-girl and a lady and she liked to tell, openly, of the combination.

III

While Aurella sat at her desk, transcribing letters and waiting for something to happen to her—something exciting—Life, Bennett Austin strolled by. Aurella's fingers missed a key on the typewriter and her heart missed a beat —but it was just one key and just one beat, for Aurella was wise about men. It took quite a remarkable man to make any impression at all.

There was something remarkable about Austin, Aurella thought. He was quite tall and slightly round-shouldered. He used his cane as if he needed it, as if he were very tired, and yet his face was quite young. He couldn't have been more than thirty-four, at most. There was something wistful and bored and indifferent in his expression that pleased Aurella. It was so different from the keen, alert, on-the-job young men or the brisk, well-here-we-are old men who most frequently dictated letters at The Metropolitan. A man like that, now, could be anyone.

Aurella found out who Bennett Austin was the next day. Near lunch-time he strolled by again, bored-looking, indifferent. This time he stopped at her desk.

"You have time for a few letters?" he asked.

Aurella nodded. She wanted to get acquainted with him. Usually, attending to business first was the best move.

She took out her note book. Austin sat down on the chair near her desk—a comfortable chair, Aurella had taken care of that—put his hat and stick on the little, nearby table and pulled a quantity of letters from his pockets. Most of them looked as if they had been carried around for weeks. The edges were crumbled, worn, grey-colored. Some, however, were quite new-looking. Several had never even been opened. Aurella waited, rather pleased at Austin's unbusinesslike actions. It was so commonplace to be regular, orderly, neat.

Aurella found out that Austin was an architect, that he had a home on Long Island and that he did rather odd houses that people usually didn't care for, but that of which, some day, of course, they'd have to realize the importance and beauty. They were houses with

absolutely plain doors, with walls minus panels and moldings, with corners a bit rounding, concrete houses, absolutely sanitary inside and out, where beauty of line made up for superfluous ornament.

Aurella was thrilled. She loved knowing artists, people who did things like that. She had always wished she knew about art, and, like most people, believed that she had rather a subtle appreciation, a feeling for things.

Austin's method of dictating was rather sketchy. He went through the pile of letters with long fingers, selecting perhaps half a dozen. To these he dictated concise, careful answers. Aurella was surprised at the businesslike expressions in them. On nearly all of the others he pencilled a few words. The rest he assorted into a neat little pile.

He handed Aurella one with pencilled words.

"Can you read that?" he asked. Aurella could. His writing was small, straight, distinct, the usual writing of a draftsman.

"Just answer these from the notes then. I don't think you'll have any trouble. You're used to this sort of thing?"

Aurella nodded.

"The rest just put off, tell them anything—that I'm busy or crazy or dead. You know. I'll walk by in a little while to see how you're getting along with them."

When he came back, Aurella had a number of the letters ready. Austin read them carefully.

"Quite wonderful," he said. "You don't know what a relief it is to find someone who understands things, who isn't machinery. You don't mind my telling you?" He smiled.

Aurella liked his smile. It made him seem young. In a moment the smile was gone and the rather sad, bored expression had taken its place.

"And when you're through, just sign 'em," he added. "You've one of those rubber-stamp things—'Dictated but not read'? Good. Use it. You see, then, if anything goes wrong, it'll be you and not me that's responsible." He chuckled.

"Do you want any of these on special paper?" asked Aurella. Sometimes her clients brought their own paper, with a firm name on it.

"Lord, no, child," he said. "Any kind of paper, anything. Now, don't ask me any more about them. And thank you."

He smiled again and walked away.

There were a lot of letters. Aurella thought that, when he came back, he might ask her to go to lunch with him. Men did that on quite short acquaintance sometimes. Austin didn't. So, later, Aurella went down in the restaurant for a bite to eat and signed for it—she got a discount, of course.

After that, Aurella didn't see Austin until two days later. She had thought of him a number of times. There was something fascinating about him, his expressions, his choice of words. After three buyers had dictated things about sheetings, sweaters and infants' underwear, Aurella welcomed him with a friendliness she hardly ever gave to chance acquaintances.

"Do you get tired of letter writing?" Austin asked.

"Of course," said Aurella. "Don't we all get tired of the things we have to do?"

"Yes," said Austin. "And most of us, I believe, get a little tired of almost everything."

He stood quite close to her desk.

"I believe," he said, and he talked very low, "that we ought to take the best of things as we find them—freedom, happiness. There is so little to get out of anything. Life does not offer us much unless we fight for it."

"That's what I think," said Aurella, startled at having her philosophy brought home to her. "I always say 'take everything you can get out of life.' Nothing matters much, anyhow."

They had lunch together.

Aurella, who had always judged restaurants by their glitter, their expensiveness, their "style," had to invent

new standards. She liked the little art club Austin took her to, the bare walls relieved with occasional foreign posters, the odd little table for two.

They talked of Life! Aurella drank deep of the talk, with little gasps of delight. She had known that, some place, somewhere, there would be someone who could talk like that about Depth and Intensity and Feeling, about Nature and Freedom and Living Your Own Life, about the False Standards of the World.

All too soon Aurella was back at her typewriter again, hammering out things about why the trip had been a poor one and descriptions of the clothes which Arkansas buyers were preparing to unload on unsuspecting natives as the latest New York fashions. But all through her letters was woven the thin golden thread of Romance. She didn't mind writing stupid business letters, when, in the back of her head, remembered bits of conversation made life pleasantly warm.

The next day Aurella went to lunch with Austin. The next night she went to dinner with him. It was a quiet dinner at a quiet restaurant, exquisitely, carefully ordered, yet with a carelessness about it all that pleased her.

Everything Austin did was nicely done. He knew so much about little things, the kinds of little things that Aurella had neglected because she had never even known they were.

Then Austin took Aurella to a concert. Aurella had never attended one like it. She really preferred musical comedies or smart dramas, with blushable bits in them. But Austin didn't ask. He took it for granted that she liked music. To Aurella all of the audience looked a bit behind in style, a bit shabby, a bit odd. She was rather uncomfortable and not a little bored, but she was afraid to make a noise, to move in her seat. She knew this was the real thing in music. She pretended to enjoy it. Finally, a little of it did get to her and when, in an exquisite moment, Austin reached out for her hand and held it close in his, she sighed comfortably. After all, this was Life. She was learning things. Austin was the kind of man who mattered. She was glad she could tell the difference.

Oh, of course, she could tell. Hadn't she been judging men for years? Hadn't she turned down proposals of matrimony from a red-haired city salesman, an out-of-town buyer and two theatrical men, to say nothing of Howard Grant? It was best not to turn Howard down too hard, for it was handy to have him around. Of course she knew. And—if this was love—this exhilaration, the feeling of being alive, why, that was all right, too. She had wanted love. She understood things. Wasn't she just about the wisest girl in town?

IV

AUSTIN left New York. Carelessly, tenderly, he told Aurella he'd have to go. They were having lunch together. Then he told her something else.

"I'm going to say something now," he said, "that, if you were narrow, Mid-Victorian, would make a difference in our friendship. I believe I know you well enough, know you are broad and big enough not to let it matter. I'm married."

Aurella had half suspected it. It would have been too good, if there hadn't been some reason why Austin couldn't have gone down a smooth lane of courtship into—even—matrimony. Why should she care? Weren't half of her best friends, men she liked quite a lot, married? Wasn't marriage rather a stupid state, after all? And, marriage doesn't blind a man to all of the attractions of other women.

She told him it didn't matter at all, that their friendship was too lovely a thing to be hurt by mere matrimony, entered into before they had even met.

"It was one of those adolescent affairs," Austin told her. "We were married when she was just eighteen and I was twenty-four. Early marriages ought to be dissolved by law, after ten years. But," he smiled whimsically,

"they aren't. So we just keep on. There are two boys, you know."

There was nothing said that was derogatory to Mrs. Austin, not a word. Only, well, of course Aurella knew how it was. Austin was kind and patient. It wasn't the old story of the wife who didn't understand. Aurella knew that old story. It wasn't just like that—and yet—

Mrs. Austin, at twenty-nine, was still a child, mentally. She didn't understand things—Life, the World, Freedom. She liked living on Long Island in summer and in town in winter, wasting time with a silly social crowd, even had social aspirations and that sort of thing. And he—he had to breathe, had to live life fully, understandingly, as he found it.

Aurella was holding his hand, under the table. He had said he would have to touch her hand before he could tell her this. Now she pressed his fingers to show she understood.

After all what difference did things like that make—matrimony—between friends? Their friendship was something too deep, too lasting, to be broken by a little, silly wife at home, a wife who never even worked a day, who didn't understand anything.

Austin went away. He wrote Aurella odd little letters, such as she had never had before. Aurella's letters, usually from commercial travelers, were heavily written, on lined hotel paper, misspelled words, bad punctuation and bromide phrases scrambled together in a great effort of friendliness. Austin's letters could hardly be called by the same name. They were written on heavy paper, in his careful, small hand, wide spaced between words, lines and margins. They were just little greetings more than letters. They did not tell events or happenings. They told moods, "soul things," instead. Aurella loved them all, from the two-paged one that hinted at happiness yet to come to the little three-line one that just said, very satisfactorily, good morning. Aurella put them into her smart hand-bag, where they got a little mixed with her rouge and powder and where the edges rolled up, but where they could be reached any minute. A subway ride was quite unnoticeable, when punctuated with phrases from Austin's letters.

Austin came back to New York two months later. He had promised to be back in six weeks, but the time stretched out, making his coming dearer. He was an old friend now, a precious friend. Aurella knew that there was a very real bond between them. She believed the same things he did about Life—that happiness was what you took out of life as you found it—that conventionalities were for stupid people, afraid to think—that morals were rather unnecessary things, obeyed by the common herd who dared not be different.

"I shall always do the thing I want to do most," said Aurella. "I shall never let little, unnecessary, man-made laws keep me from any happiness that may come to me. After all, nothing really matters but doing what you want to do. I'm pretty wise about life."

It was summer and there were only a few things in town. Aurella and Austin went to a stupid musical comedy on the first night of his return. Then they had a quiet little supper. Then Austin took Aurella home and kissed her, gently, in the hallway.

Aurella had been kissed before, from school-days on. But one thing must be granted Aurella—she had never let a man kiss her unless he first told her he loved her and had promised matrimony. It was in her code of things. Then she could kiss him and turn him down, pleasurably.

Austin's kiss was different. He put his arms around her very quietly, very tenderly, very gently—and kissed her. There was nothing rough or ugly or accidental about it. It was not the sort of a kiss that one draws away from, with a slap or a giggle. When she waked up in the night, Aurella thought it very beautiful and shivered with the delight of it.

Days passed pleasantly. It is easy to take letters from boring strangers, to

toss smart remarks to impudently inclined guests of The Metropolitan, to be indifferently polite to regular patrons, when the evening holds an allure, fascination, exquisite pleasure.

Austin read poems to Aurella. Some of them she didn't understand very well and she grew restless at the long passages. But she tried not to let on that she didn't know what they were about and she wouldn't admit to herself that they bored her. There was more good music, too. Aurella tried hard not to notice how long the evenings were then.

She did care for Austin a great deal. She loved to touch his long fingers, to study his profile. She felt that he was nobler, a step higher in every way than anyone she had ever known before. She tried to live up to the good things he told her about herself.

V

It was hot in town, dusty and smelly. Aurella was to get two weeks' vacation, starting with Saturday afternoon. Mr. Kuhlman, her boss—he had the concessions for stenographers at The Metropolitan—had promised the vacation to her weeks before. He was nice to the girls.

Aurella planned to spend perhaps one week in the country some place, and the other week at a resort that Howard had been telling her about. But with Austin in town she had neglected to make any definite arrangements. There was a new hotel at the resort and it had some mighty good professional dancers and a wonderful dancing floor and you could get awfully good rates and there was a bath with every room.

But even the hot city with Austin in it seemed delightful. He could find cool, pleasant spots. He was almost indifferent to weather conditions, although he hated all things ugly or sordid or dirty.

On Wednesday Austin said that he was going away—leaving on Saturday, probably. On Thursday he first spoke of the cottage.

"I'm going for a week," he said. "It's up in Westchester County, a cottage, a cottage I designed for some people, last year. It's quite lovely, set on a little green hill, with good-looking picture-book views from all of the windows. You can see the Hudson. At night it's quite wonderful. Almost outside of the door is a tiny blue river that flows into it. It's just right for a morning plunge. I've a lot of work to do up there, plans and things, and some books to read that have to be read almost in solitude. It will be my first real vacation in years."

At dinner, quite casually, he added: "You'll like the cottage. It's one of the real things in life. You'll like me better in the country, too. Can you cook? We'll eat at a neighboring farmhouse, but do say you'll do the breakfasts, if I help. Crisp broiled bacon and things like that—and I'll bake Johnnie cakes for you."

"I—I didn't know I was going," said Aurella.

"Of course you're going, child," said Austin. "It's going to be a wonderful week—our own week. I've been planning it for a long, long time. It will be quite perfect, I hope. Just a week of completeness—and we'll always have the memory of it."

Somehow Aurella couldn't draw herself up and say, indignantly, "What do you mean?" or "How dare you?" as she would have done to anyone else. This seemed so logical an outcome, so much an answer to her desire to know Life. She knew what a week with Austin would mean—and yet, it seemed perfectly right to her. At the end of the week, oh, well, she'd still have a week's vacation left for the fashionable hotel and then she'd come back and go to work again—typing letters.

Why shouldn't she? Men did things like that! Wasn't she self-supporting, independent, complete? No one would ever know, of course, but, even more than that, wasn't it right to take things, happiness, when you can get them? It isn't as if she were going to hurt anyone else. A generation back it might be

wrong, but now . . . The wife on Long Island—she was a little silly, who didn't understand things. More than likely she was having affairs herself, ugly affairs, flirtations, that sort of thing.

They were to leave Saturday at three. Austin had some work to do in town—some business men to consult about some sort of a country club that was to be built during the winter for next summer, but he'd be through by then. It all fit in so perfectly with Aurella's vacation plans. There was no one she had to tell. Howard Grant might ask some things, but, after all, what was Howard Grant to her, anyhow? Later, oh, she might consider him again. But, well, she didn't have to tell him what she did. More than likely his affairs . . .

Friday, Aurella didn't see Austin all day. A little, whimsical note told her that he was busy—a nuisance, but unavoidable. He said he would see her in the morning and there were little sketches of a tiny cottage on a hilltop in the margins of the note.

Saturday morning Aurella woke up early, dressed and packed her suitcase carefully, picking out dainty bits of lingerie, the sort of thing that every girl always has tucked away for special occasions. Wasn't this a—the—special occasion? She told her landlady that she'd be gone for a week or two and that she needn't bother about forwarding mail—she hardly ever got any important mail, anyhow.

She took the suitcase down in the subway with her. She put it in the locker with her hat and coat. At her desk on the mezzanine floor a substitute girl was waiting. Aurella explained the work and the girl left, promising to report quite promptly in the morning—it was Aurella's Sunday on duty.

Aurella wrote a few letters, left over from the day before. Two whole weeks without letters! One week of Dreams Coming True! If only Austin had asked her to go away with him for a lifetime! But he couldn't leave his wife and the children, of course. He had talked, though, of the time when the boys would be a little older, when he could be free and have just her.

If some other man had suggested the trip—one of the out-of-town buyers, for example—Aurella shuddered at the thought of it—she would have been insulted, furious. But then, of course, no one else would have dared, even.

At ten, as Aurella typed, mechanically, a bell-boy brought a note to her. It was from Howard Grant. It read:

"We are leaving at two for the Mohassett Hotel. We've engaged rooms, as I've been trying to tell you all week, though I don't believe you listened. Miss Hammer, of the magazine counter, and a friend of hers and Bill and Fred Louis and the tall man who goes with Miss Hammer and I. Why don't you be a sport and come?

"I wish I might dare suggest that you run over to the courthouse with me and then we could go as Mr. and Mrs. Grant and chaperon the bunch. Doesn't that sound great? But you said I couldn't propose again until you said the word. This is as good a time as any. Remember the ad that said 'Any day may be too late'? Why delay?

"Honest, Aurella, why don't you come along? Jo, the little fat bell hop, said you brought a suitcase with you. Does that mean you're coming? I hope so. I can't get away now. Answer at once. Send one of the boys home for your things, if you haven't got them. I'm in earnest about that 'Mrs.' stug, too.

"HOWARD."

Aurella read the note, lips curling. There was no soul in it.

"Tell Mr. Grant," she told the boy, "that there is no answer just now. I'll be down, myself, in a little while and answer him in person."

Half an hour later a package came from Austin. It contained letters and a note. He wrote:

"Dear, I don't dare see you yet,

today. I am keeping the seeing of you as a reward for working so hard, now.

"You said you'd have time to answer these letters for me. I wrote suggestions for the answers on the first two or three and then I felt how ridiculous it was for me to go on, with you knowing better than I what to say.

"Will you use the funny little rubber stamp that says 'Dictated but not read' on them and chuck them into the mail? And for that, and just because you ARE, *I am grateful.*

"And at three I shall come for you.

"B. A."

That was all. Aurella read it four times.

VI

SHE finished all of her other work first and then started on Austin's letters. They were the usual ones, letters from contractors about plans, letters semi-personal about houses in the air, on paper and existent, a pleasant letter from an old friend.

One of the letters Aurella had kept nearly to the last, for she saw from the envelope that it was from a firm that wrote at length and in detail about business and that it meant a long answer and the checking up of some accounts that she had been holding for them. Now she took it out. It was rather thick.

It was the contents that she had expected and a bit more. For, squeezed in with the heavy-sheeted business letter was another letter, one written on thin linen tablet-paper, the kind that stands for economy more than elegance.

Aurella did not hesitate about reading it. It never occurred to her that she ought to hesitate. Letters to her were no longer personal things, to be read only by permission, to be ignored if not addressed to the reader. To Aurella a letter was for two things, to be read and answered. Too many letters, addressed to every conceivable person, came to her to make her even realize that there were ethics in letter-reading.

"Dear Bennett: (read Aurella.)

"I was so glad to get your letters, for you hadn't written in two weeks, and I was worried about you. I wanted to send a telegram, but I know how it annoys you for me to do things like that, so I didn't.

"I am so glad that you are well. The children and I are well, too. I am better today than I have been for several weeks. I had to go to see Dr. D. last week, but he told me not to worry, that the way I felt was quite usual and that I was doing very nicely. I feel very well today, so don't worry over me. I do hope that the baby will be a girl, for I believe that you would rather have a little daughter and she would be such company for me as she grew up.

"I wish you had thought to send a check in your letter. I don't want to annoy you about it, for I know you are working hard for us and that you have so many more important things on your mind and you forget, but Ferris has been asking a couple of times for his money and I've had to let Mary go and I can't do part of the work and the boys are so little for housework. They have been very good and help me with the dishes every day and they send their love to Daddy.

"The garden is growing nicely, and we will have beans from our vines next week. I wish you could be home in time for them.

"I don't want to be insistent or spoil your plans, but I wish you could spend a week here with us now, though I know how busy you are. The boys so love to have you home, and of course I do. You have told me so little about your plans lately, dear, but it is lovely out here now. The little summer-

house is almost covered with vines and we have been having a lot of our meals there.

"Please don't be annoyed—I am going to break a promise to you and refer to something I had promised not to, but, dear, I'm afraid that you are 'wandering' again. I do so hope you aren't, really for your sake, dear. You are so miserable and repentant later, when you come home. I want to think of you as clean and fine, always. And the girl—if there is a girl again this time, though I do hope not—won't you consider her a little too? If I'm wrong, forgive me, won't you? I won't say any more, only we think of you and want you to come out here if you can get away. We all love you a great deal.

MARGARET."

Aurella read every word of it and then let the pages slip onto the floor. This was her fine lover—her dreamer—her idealist! Margaret was a frivolous chatterbox, was she?—trying to be brave with two boys, and another baby coming, and no money! She remembered Austin's sentences about unnecessary responsibilities, about ugly bonds, about hating to think about money, about Freedom. So—she—Aurella Burns—had planned to be free—with him. A lovely sort of freedom!

Well, thank goodness there was time enough. She had been a goose. And all of the time she had thought of herself as such a wise one, the wisest girl in town, eh? Here she had just about fallen for the very easiest game in the world—the misunderstood wife stunt, in a new disguise. A week in the country! And she'd probably have been bored to death with poems she didn't understand and talks about Life she didn't understand. Just now, even the morals of it didn't seem as lovely as she had thought they were. After all, she had been—well, rather good all along; and now she had planned to go to the country with a married man. A bit sordid? Well, rather.

She put a clean sheet of paper and paper for one carbon copy in the typewriter and bit her lip a minute. Then she wrote:

"Dear Margaret:

"I'm sorry I didn't answer your letter sooner, but this answer will please you, I think. I'll leave tomorrow morning for home, so you'll see me nearly as soon as you get this letter. Don't worry about money. We'll fix that and other things when I get there. Give the boys kisses from me. Everything is all right here.

"With love from

"BENNETT."

She drew it out of the typewriter and stamped it with the little rubber stamp, "Dictated but not read." She addressed an envelope, inserted the letter and sealed and stamped the envelope.

Mechanically, she finished the last letters. Then she inserted another sheet of paper into the typewriter. She didn't need a carbon this time. She wrote, hurriedly:

"Dear Friend of Freedom:

"I'm enclosing the carbon of a letter I am sending. You told me to answer all of your mail, and I did. All of the other letters I'm leaving for you to look over, but I'll mail this one myself.

"I said you'd go home tomorrow, instead of today, so you could put in some time buying a few things to take with you. Take the boys a toy or two with my love. I hope you have a pleasant vacation.

She signed her name. She wanted to say something rather cutting, but couldn't think of anything to say. She folded the note and put it into an envelope with a carbon of the letter she had written to Mrs. Austin. She wrapped up the business letters and the note she had just written into a flat bundle and addressed them to Austin. She called a bell-boy.

"Give these to Mr. Bennett Austin when he comes to my desk, around three."

It was one of the bell-boys she knew she could depend on. She tipped him rather liberally.

VII

It was eleven o'clock. Glancing across the railing, past the bell-boys, past the posing out-of-work actors, past the always-waiting women, she saw the hotel desk and Howard Grant, who, with cool indifference, was allowing a man to sign his name on the register.

After all, Howard was a dear; quite the nicest man she knew. He didn't bore her with long, non-understandable poems about Life. He knew all about theaters and movies and restaurants. He didn't mind little annoying, ugly things. He didn't talk about one thing—and live something else. Howard was mighty nice. She'd known him for two years and he'd been nice all the time. After all, a future without Howard was rather uncompanionable. Well, there was no reason why she couldn't have Howard. Thank heavens, there was no past to confess to him, or have on her conscience.

This was Saturday and the beginning of Howard's vacation and hers. Why not the Hotel Mohasset? Even being a Mrs. would be rather fun—and it would be putting it over a lot of people. It wasn't as though she hadn't known, right from the start, that she was going to marry Howard some day. It was quite a satisfactory conclusion. And there was the suitcase all full of her nicest things.

She locked her desk. She was to leave her key at the office for the substitute. In the wash-room she adjusted her hat to its smartest angle and powdered her nose. When one is going to do such an important thing as be married . . .

She walked down the short flight of stairs and went up to the counter where Howard was.

"Be with you in a minute," Howard said, and smiled.

"Show this gentleman to 1284," he directed in haughty tones to a waiting bell-boy.

He came up to Aurella and smiled, for him rather wistfully.

"Well, what's the answer?" he asked.

"It seems to me," said Aurella, "that your suggestions are rather good. I've never been a chaperon, you see."

"You don't mean—getting married—right now?"

"It's quite all right with me," said Aurella.

"My dear child," said Howard, "you're a wonder and I love you. If it wasn't for these three million folks I'd kiss you across the counter." Unconsciously, he raised his hand to his hair to see if it was unruffled.

"I'll get right out of here this minute and we'll beat it down to the City Hall—there may be a rule about closing on Saturday afternoon, and then—oh, you nice child."

He disappeared and, a moment later, hat in hand, appeared on Aurella's side of the counter.

Aurella sighed. She never knew quite what for. But, getting married is rather serious and that's what she was going to do. It sounded safe and comfortable, though. And, with all of her wisdom, she had pretty nearly been the stupid one. But she hadn't been! After all, she was a little too wise to let anyone put anything over her. Howard Grant was a good catch, considering everything. She and Howard really did understand each other—little, everyday things, without pretending. He'd be awfully good to her, she knew. But she'd be good to him, too.

Aurella and Howard walked out of the lobby together. Into a letter-box, Aurella dropped a letter and smiled. Had she missed something? Was life just adventuring? Was there something else back of it all? Well, she was going to have a mighty good chance at being happy. That was the big thing. She felt pretty wise about things, about life. Wasn't she the wisest girl in town?

THE SENSIBLE CONVICT

By William Rose Benét

I HEARD a sensible convict
Who sat in stripes and smiled
And gave me his benediction
As round-faced as a child.
I don't know where the warden was
As I peered through the bars,
But I could swear the man did wear
A crown of cloudy stars.

So I said, "What are the dreams you get
In prison—in prison?"
He said, "I'll tell you of my dreams in hell—in hell,
And you wouldn't think I'd dream the like before the sun was risen,
But this is how I dream them in my prison-cell.

"Up a ladder of moonshine
Over the prison wall
I saw a harlequin clamber
And tip-toe stand up tall.
Chequered in red and blue and green
He twirled where the light was gold,
And a columbine, all snow and wine,
Was there for his arms to hold!

"And down through my square of window,
Floating across the floor,
Golden spangled dancers
Whirled to the iron door,
Little fairy ladies, quaintly curtseying,
And I on a throne all of my own,
An iron-bedstead king!

"Ain't it the limit what dreams we get
In prison—in prison?
Why, you can see I'm laughing yet, in hell—in hell!
But that's the way they come to me before the sun has risen;
So they say that I'm contented with my prison-cell!"

THE GODDESS OF UGLINESS

By Louis Sherwin

JUST as I was beginning this article the front pages of the newspapers erupted with a very usual sort of story. A young man, fairly well to do, was interrupted during his after-dinner coffee by the announcement that his divorced wife wished to see him. He had her admitted. A dispute ensued. He denied the woman's request and turned his back to indicate that the interview was closed, whereupon she pulled out a revolver and killed him.

Now, it is not my purpose to comment on a *cause célèbre* that is still *sub judice* except to wager the price of this article to a glass of grape juice that the woman will be triumphantly acquitted and to repeat that it is a very usual sort of story—in America. The reason I shall now explain to my entire satisfaction.

When I was studying criminal law in England I used to observe with much curiosity that in France any woman, provided she were fairly good-looking and interesting, could commit murder with an impunity quite flabbergasting to the English mind. To anybody with a glimmer of familiarity with the Latin, particularly the French temperament, the reason for such indulgence is no mystery at all. It is to be sought not in ethics, but in esthetics. The Frenchman argues—and quite accurately—that a beautiful or clever woman is a very rare and desirable phenomenon. Since she is so rare, she should be preserved at all costs—even the cost of allowing her an occasional murder or so. The consequence is that attractive Frenchwomen can slay any objectionable man without any worse consequences than a few dozen offers of marriage.

Of this attitude the Englishman is quite incapable. He likes a beautiful woman, other qualities being equal. But above all things, he likes an obedient woman. Wherein he shows excellent common sense. Dispute this as you will and cite me individual Englishmen who differ. But the English national character is unmistakably written in their laws. There is no country where it is so pleasant to be a man as England. God knows what will happen to it after the war or what changes the voting of women will make. I am talking of the ante-bellum England. To be an Englishman—and rich—was about the most pleasant, agreeable lot that could fall to a human being.

It was also the safest. They took no chances with their women-folk. If there were any even slightly suspicious circumstances about father's death, mother went to the Bastille and thence, if they could prove anything against her, to the bowstring. And if they could not actually prove anything, they kept her in the Bastille anyway for twenty years or so *pour encourager les autres*—witness the case of Mrs. Maybrick. Perhaps it was sometimes unfair. But the result was that husbands lived longer in England than they do in America.

When I first came over here and observed the extraordinary freedom with which women commit murder, I attributed it to the same motives that govern the French. I noticed that our queens of homicide were invariably described in the public prints as beautiful. And I believed it. (That was before I became a police reporter.) I thought this was a hopeful sign of a

real, innate sense of beauty in the American people, despite the appalling ugliness of their houses, and despite the fact that there was hardly a decent piece of statuary in any public place and that most American towns were dirtier than Sheffield and more hideous than the clothes of a German Frau Professor.

Then I became a reporter and learned that any female who is arrested, no matter how revolting her appearance, must always be invested with the charms of Lais and the brains of Ninon de L'Enclos—just as any account of a burglar who wears a collar must always contain an allusion to Raffles. Subsequently I met one or two of our most celebrated lady assassins and, oh, my! brethren, *quelles vaches*. They were as unattractive as an English Sunday, poor wretches!

There was one hag, in particular, who was definitely proved to have bought a revolver in San Francisco and traveled all the way to Denver, where she slew a policeman. The defense was the usual pestilent unwritten law wish-wash of seduction and betrayal and all the weary rest of it—which would never be permitted if most judges knew their business. But that is another story. The facts established were that some years before the murder the lady had contrived to have amorous passages with the copper. When she learned that he had married a young, good-looking woman she bought the gun and did the deed.

Now, even a juryman—and, of course, you know the stupidest men in any community are, on the ayerage, chosen for jurors; it is the one point upon which prosecuting and defending attorneys are agreed—even a juryman could see that there never could have been a question of seduction or deceit in the case of such an ill-favored harridan. In fact, no intelligent person could see how she continued to have any sort of relations with any but a blind man unless it was she who used the chloroform. But the twelve free and intelligent talesmen, observing that it was a contest between a hag and a pretty woman, unhesitatingly acquitted the hag. I never shall forget the triumphant leer she flung at the dead man's widow as she left the court-room.

Another more celebrated case in the South illustrates my point still better. In this a Mrs. L—instead of *strafe*-ing her amoristic husband, deliberately murdered Mrs. T—whom she had suspected of temporarily annexing Mr. L's nomadic affections. Mrs. T was a very attractive person. Mrs. L, according to the reporters, had the beauty, style, dignity of Ellen Terry and the Duchesse de la Roche Guyon. She lived amid cultured surroundings in a charming villa, etc., etc. Señores, I saw her, and, upon my honor, she had a face that would send an escaped anchorite screaming back to his cell. Her charming villa was one of those architectural wooden horrors for which Queen Anne bears the blame, painted the most hideous yellow you ever saw. For her cultivated surroundings, Grand Rapids had done its most damnable worst. In short, the good lady, in her person, her clothes, her house, represented the acme of ugliness. She was acquitted, although not a soul in America today has any real doubt of her guilt.

I have dwelt upon all these repulsive details in connection with this worthy female because it was she who enlightened me about the real psychology of Americans. It is not merely that we are sentimental—though of course sentimentality does frequently lead to excesses so debauched as to make the most hardened cynicism shudder. Sentimentality alone does not account for allowing ugly women to commit murder. Even such as are selected for gentlemen of the jury cannot wax sentimental over a hard-featured frump whose very presence in the prisoner's dock is a proof that she is an unpleasant, unlovable beldam. For, mark you, here is a fact to be considered: beautiful women do not commit murder in America—they do not have to. Any damsel who is even half attractive can

commit all the murders she wants by proxy. And she need not do a thing or say a word that would render her liable as accessory before the fact. All she has to do is to tell some gullible ass a story about having been betrayed or insulted and he will do it for her.

The most glaring instance of this was a case that for some ten years filled the front pages of the newspapers to the huge delight of the mob and the disgust of all sensitive persons. It might be called the tragedy of Pygmalion. For the murdered man was an artist, a man who made beautiful things, who was responsible for most of the few public monuments that gladden the cultivated eye in this civilization of ugliness. In his life, as in his work, he was an artist.

The newspapers, always thoroughly democratic in their hatred of real brains, tried to make him out a *debauché,* taking their cue from the lawyers who defended his murderer. As a matter of fact he was nothing of the sort.

He was, however, what a Hearst journalist would call a cynic: that is to say he had a keen eye for reality. He saw that the difference between an American society queen and a young damsel from the provinces was merely a matter of a little grammar and a lot of clothes, that fundamentally Jane Hicks of Podunk was no more unlettered or carelessly mannered than Jane Vandersniffle of Newport, that if you give Mlle. Hicks a decent dressmaker and a smattering of smart gibberish you might place her alongside of the Vandersniffles and nobody could tell the difference. So it was his diversion to play Pygmalion to the Hicks damsels, just as Shaw's professor of philology did to the flower girl.

One of these rustic creatures was a particularly apt pupil. He taught her the difference between Rodin and the tombstone carvers who ornament most public buildings in America. He taught her how to carry herself, how to dress, how to talk. By listening to the conversation of not only an artist but a cultivated man of the world she learned to put up a very fair imitation. So much so that reporters who subsequently interviewed her were fairly dazzled by her erudite chatter about the books she had never read.

Naturally he was ambitious for her. With her good looks and his training she might just as well have captured a man of the really smart crowd. Any sapheaded hussy can get a Pittsburgh millionaire's son, but the Newport lot are rather more wary. And his joke would not be complete unless he saw his pupil presented at court and all that sort of thing. So he was inevitably disappointed when, in her greed and anxiety, she flung herself away on a notorious young millionaire degenerate, a cad of the first water, probably the most unhappy specimen that ever bounded on Broadway. The editorials were accustomed to using him as a horrible example of the rich man's spoiled son.

As a matter of fact money had nothing to do with his spoiling. He would have been a bounder no matter what his circumstances. But his case is a curious proof of the truth that an excess of virtue is just as dangerous to the human soul and body as an excess of vice, as Havelock Ellis has shown in his wise and sympathetic essay on St. Francis of Assisi.

Not that our young bounder was guilty of any excess of virtue. But it was in him that nature was restoring a balance. His father, according to all accounts, led a life of morbid abstinence. He belonged to one of the hellfire creeds that preserve today everything that is worst in Pauline Christianity: "its accursed intolerance, its contempt for reason, for beautiful living." With the morbid zeal that only these creeds can arouse, the father suppressed every sane and human instinct in him, with the result that they came out with an equally fierce and morbid frenzy in his son. At sixteen he was a newspaper headliner through his precocious vices, at twenty-one he was a subject for Krafft-Ebing.

This was the man whom Pygmalion's

pupil selected as an easy path to fortune. And naturally Pygmalion was disgusted.

The girl, on the other hand, thought she had done a very clever thing. She also imagined that after her return from the honeymoon the erstwhile relations with her Pygmalion would continue. For the tragedy of every Pygmalion is not that he falls in love with the statue but that the statue falls in love with him.

Now, this particular girl represented the artist's most disappointing failure and his one desire was to see no more of her. Chagrined at her inability to win him back, humiliated by his obvious displeasure, she turned to the one idea that such souls inevitably turn to—revenge. Nothing was easier than to inflame her husband's mind with a tale of seduction and betrayal, the quiet studio, the knockout drops and all the wild dime-novel inventions that are the invariable resource of that type of mind.

The husband, with his poor brain sapped by all manner of abuses, became an easy tool. The most maudlin sentimentalists are invariably rakes and harlots. So, with the proud ardor of a Lohengrin, he murdered Pygmalion, shot him in the back while he was sitting down and, of course, unarmed.

It was equally a matter of course that he escaped the consequences, this precious Galahad of the bagnio. Not, as the cheap popular imagination supposes, because he was a rich man. His money counted heavily against him. In sentimental crimes the poor man stands a much better chance of escaping than the rich, as the records of the courts in America will show. This particular vicious clown got his liberty because he made a deliberate appeal to Puritan sentimentalism. The most shameful part of the whole procedure was the way the lawyers were suffered to befoul the name of the murdered artist. But the fact remains that this is an invariably successful maneuver of every such murder trial.

I used to think it was purely the sentimentality of the appeal that led jurors to approve of this form of lynching. But an analysis of these cases shows it is something more deeply rooted and even more pernicious than sentimentality. It is the Puritan hatred of beauty pushed to the point of a positive if unconscious worship of ugliness.

Consider the case I have just been describing, for instance. The artist who was murdered personified the beauty of life. He made beautiful things and for that alone was an object of suspicion to sellers of sanded sugar and watered milk. Moreover, life to him meant joy, truth, light. The joy that he expressed was painted as vice, the truth as cynicism, the light as a negation of all religion. In all Catholic countries, where they have not quite forgotten the beauty of the Christian faith, where the joyous message of Jesus has not been entirely beclouded by the morbid murk of Paul, he would have been one of the most honored citizens. In England he would have existed on sufferance, but at least his life would have been safe. In America he was murdered and his reputation dragged through the muck by a handful of striving attorneys.

It is this same deadly worship of ugliness that leads us to allow the most ill-favored females to kill with impunity. In all the cases I have cited, you will remember, the contest was between Venus and Sycorax. If that most celebrated of connoisseurs, the shepherd Paris, had been an American there would have been no Trojan War. For, though even a Massachusetts shepherd would have wanted to give the apple to Venus, his Puritan conscience would have told him to hand it to Minerva because she was the least attractive of the three ladies—and the most eminently representative of Boston culchaw.

I am, of course, saying nothing new in maintaining that distrust, hatred and fear of beauty is a dominating impulse in this country. The aversion to art is not a mere matter of national youthfulness and crudity. It is a symptom

of a positive, vital, corrosive faith. The vice societies are curious examples. But the most popular high priests of this religion at present are the leaders of the prohibition movement. It has been pointed out that the Puritans abolished the ancient pastime of bear-baiting, not because they were grieved by the pain it inflicted on the bear but because they were shocked by the pleasure it afforded the spectators. Turning back the pages of our history a little further, it was the same motive that led the Christians of the fourth century to induce Constantine to abolish the gladiatorial games. This is the real explanation of prohibition. Mr. Mencken has pointed out that it is no spontaneous movement of hysteria and hypocrisy, but a superbly organized, shrewdly managed art-bout, lavishly financed by a few rich men. And their motives are thoroughly consistent with local traditions. It is not because the Demon Rum does harm to some people that the Anti-Saloon League is sweeping the country, but because the use of alcohol gives a great many people pleasure, makes their lives happier and the industrial slavery we call civilization more endurable.

Here is another symptom of our national religion: nearly all of our most popular actresses are frights. And in no other country can you observe such a curious fact. Even in England, where the nonconformist conscience still exercises a pernicious power, the most successful women on the stage are reasonably easy to look at. But here—? Just count them over. When a beautiful woman like Ethel Barrymore or Maxine Elliott displays any ability we promptly proceed to disparage it. We turn up our critical noses and sniff: "Hrrmph! Just a good-looking woman—of course, she can't act." On the other hand, we persistently pretend that Maude Adams can act—although on the few occasions when she has attempted it, such as in "Chantecler," her failure was grotesque—simply because she is absolutely devoid of anything that remotely resembles beauty.

Apply any test you like, you will find that Sycorax is our national goddess, and by her worship you can explain everything in the national character.

THE ROAD TO STUPIDITY

By Karl W Kessler

WE have been very congenial. Every day for months we have been together for a few moments at least.

We have motored together, dined together and gone to the opera together. With each meeting he has become more fascinating. . . .

I have been supremely happy. His sparkling wit and good humor have been sources of constant inspiration, standing me in good stead when the world seemed a colorless, uninteresting place in which to live.

And now he is going to spoil it all! A carelessly uttered word last evening makes me certain that he is falling in love with me. . . .

He will be so stupid!

THE SURE SIGN

By Hinson Stiles

I FEAR I am going crazy.

I have long suspected it, but my recent actions indicate beyond a doubt that I am mentally abnormal.

Last week I met a beautiful woman, and she has exerted a strange influence over me, although she pretends that she is only showing cordiality out of fondness for my wife.

When I wake up in the morning I can see nothing but nebulistic images of this wonderful creature. She gets into my coffee at breakfast and reflects a bewitching face.

At business when I kiss my stenographer the image of the beauteous lady arises like feathery mist in the morning. She is inevitable. I cannot escape her clutching charm.

Yet I know I am going crazy.

I really love my wife better than the beautiful lady.

A BALM

By E. Belding Beach

THERE is something about Myrtle that I like! She has large feet, a rasping voice, eyes that glisten like an oyster, and terrible red hair. She has no money. What I like about her is that she knows enough to cross the street when she sees me coming.

THERE are three ages at which a woman is the most dangerous. At the age of seventeen, eighteen and at any time over nineteen.

THERE are no stout women or slender women. There are only fat women and hugable women.

THE never-married men are the greatest cowards. The never-divorced are close behind.

THE GAMUT

By Achmed Abdullah

I

TODAY, descending haltingly, protestingly, to the close of his life, he was Angus W. Kerr, multimillionaire.

All his life, from the drowsy spring days up the State when he swapped marbles and penknives and occasional beetles with the other boys of the village school to the autumn of his years, when he traded in railways and timber lands, in Legislatures and the destinies of his fellow-men, he had never touched any question without a whole-hearted and sweeping reference to the particular benefit he himself would derive from it, and he had made money with a selfishness that was entirely and sublimely shameless. His was a name to conjure with—and he was old beyond his years, osseous, purse-mouthed, crane-necked, gray-faced.

Today he was cursed and clouded with that profound and brooding melancholia which dwells at the heart of success and festers and gangrenes its core.

"I am bored," he said, half an hour after he had dropped from his private Pullman at the Grand Central Depot to the old doctor who sat facing him in his wainscoted, cigar-flavored, red-plushed library. "I am tired with life, with people, with myself—with everything and everybody, Macdonald. I have"—he had an epic, slashing, exaggerated manner of choosing words when the mood took him—"I have tasted the honey of virtue and the gall of vice, and—"

"Aye!" interrupted Doctor James Macdonald, who was a Scot and, by the same token, a sardonic searcher after philosophical truths, "and I take it ye found both virtue and sin useless—toys for pap-fed weaklings. Did ye not, Mr. Kerr?"

"I did."

"And now ye come to me because, though ye believe in neither God nor the Devil, ye have a certain belief in the man who raised himself from the guinea fees of Glasgow to five-hundred-dollar consultations with the very rich . . ."

"Yes."

"And what do ye want me to do?"

"I want you to help me—No!" as the doctor drew out fountain pen and prescription pad. "Never mind your bromides. Give me something for . . ." he paused, "for my soul."

"Ye are thinking that ye have a soul?"

"I guess so."

"And ye want me to help ye?"

"Yes."

"I am not a priest, Mr. Kerr," said Doctor Macdonald with a twinkle in his grey eyes.

"But I'll pay you like a Cardinal."

"Perhaps it's religion ye need," said the doctor. "It helped John Knox to combat the Devil. It even helped Charles the Fifth—and he was a rank Papist—"

"But it won't help me! I'm not the sort to chew a theological cud. I'm not the sort to meditate about some damned self-perfecting regenesis, and forget this world's bully chaos. I am red-blooded."

The other considered.

"Have ye ever tried giving to charity?" he asked after a pause, "giving largely, constructively, as ye would handle a railroad?"

Angus Kerr shook his head.

"Charity," he said, "a million here, a million there? Free baths, a fund for tuberculosis research, a new university endowed, an old one propped up and buttressed? Clout it together from the ground up? Put my heart into it, and my brain, and my money? Handle it all myself?"

"Exactly."

"I don't see it. Charity is only a sniffling thing—a weakly, selfish thing—a maudlin attempt to wheedle a discount from the Recording Angel who writes down our good deeds and our bad. Charity is a form of selfishness—and selfishness, to be worth while, must be big—" He thumped the table with his clenched fist. "Such selfishness—such charity—must be massive—gigantic!"

"And ye have never come upon a thing that demanded such charity—such selfishness, as ye are pleased to miscall it? Ye have never come upon a thing that cried out to ye in the wilderness, as it were—that made it incumbent on ye to right the cursed wrong of it with every ounce of your dour grey matter, with every last dollar of your worldly goods?"

"No."

"Then," continued the doctor, "it's maybe that ye are one of those supermen—and it's more power you want. Political success!"

"Don't mention that word to me."

"Which?"

"Success!" He gave a curious, flat laugh. "Why, man, success is at the very root of the thing which I'm asking you to cure. I am sick of success—sick of luck. Everything happens just as I wish it—often even before I have had a chance to formulate the wish. I miss the spice of effort, of surprise, of expectation. Whatever I touch succeeds—inevitably, logically, mathematically."

"Then what *do* ye want?"

"I want what the others have—what all the world has, neither more nor less. My friends have unlucky love affairs, business troubles, family quarrels. They have fights and rows and failures. People hurt them and attack them and cheat them. They live, and I—" he made a sweeping gesture, "I watch the hours pass and the days and the weeks and the months and I know everything that is going to happen to me as if it had happened before, in a former life. Would you believe that I have never had as much as an automobile accident, that I have never missed a train, that I have never trumped my partner's ace? Success comes. In big things and in small. Always! But it comes with the bloom rubbed off—flat, stinking, sickening, like dregs. Why, Macdonald, I have even lost the faculty of desiring!"

The doctor rose.

"Angus Kerr," he said solemnly, "I have it. I can cure ye."

"How?"

"Ye need fear."

"Nonsense. I need hope."

"Hope is only the result of fear—and fear is the most humanizing thing in the world. It's fear ye need, man. Go out and hunt it. Rather, let it come to ye. Don't sidestep it. Help it along if ye can." He passed him his fountain pen. "My fee is the usual—five hundred."

Angus Kerr smiled.

"I'll give it to you—if I should get cured," he said as he left the room.

"Perhaps," he added, from the door, "it's going to be the one debt that I'll never pay."

"Ye'll pay—somehow," mumbled the doctor.

II

All his life, Angus Kerr had had the trick of being able to separate interest from inclination and emotions from business; he had decomposed success into a few simple elements as he would decompose a force in a question of abstract dynamics; and so when, brooding, melancholy, he found on his return to his office that his presence in Paris was needed to wind up an important financial deal, he took ship.

Eight days later he was in Paris. The magic of his luck held true; it took

him but a few hours to finish the deal; and now, in the evening, he found himself in Dijon. He had to change cars there for the Puy de Dôme where he was going to visit his widowed sister who had taken an old chateau for the season.

Since early morning it had been snowing. The platform was cold and draughty, and he was glad when shortly before midnight the Southbound train pulled into the station.

Ever since he had left New York he had been in a blacker, more hopeless mood than usual. Never had he been more bored with life. Thinking back, he considered Doctor Macdonald's advice inane—it had been very much like telling a man dying with thirst in a waterless desert to go out and help himself to a river. His life stretched on as it had in the past—a gray pattern, flat and dull, without dazzling highlights, without blotchy shadows, without contrasts of any sort, and he had the curious sensation that his continuous success, his lack of fear and hope and expectation and surprise, was sucking the identity of separate existence out of his life, was disintegrating and breaking the structure of his being and kneading it into a whole with the stony, swinging, eternal cosmos.

He entered a compartment and sat down on the narrow plush bench. Across from him another man was sitting, half recumbent, one leg straight out, the other crooked, the head at a grotesque angle supported by the hard, bolster-like pillow that divided the back of the bench down the middle—evidently in a doze.

The green baize curtain was slid across the flickering gas lamp and plunged the compartment in half light. Outside, as the train creaked away toward the barren Puy de Dôme, the landscape was snow white, slashed with yellow and lack-lustre black. A solid head of heat zummed in the old-fashioned pipes that ran beneath the seats, and Angus Kerr slipped off his fur coat with a faint sigh of satisfaction. He curled himself up on the long, narrow bench and closed his eyes. Sleep would not come, so he sat up again and took a book from his grip.

But he could not read. The light was too bad, and he did not like to disturb the other man.

He looked at him. He considered, with a faint gnawing of envy, that it took a European to be able to sleep in these narrow, ramshackle, comfortless boxes of compartment cars.

Funny way of sleeping, too, he thought the next moment—why, the man would get a crick in his neck with his head at that ridiculous angle, touching the bolster. . . .

Quite suddenly Angus Kerr gave a little start. For he had the sensation that somebody was looking at him, and, a moment later, when his eyes got more used to the half light, he knew that it was the man opposite—whom he had thought asleep.

The man was staring at him fixedly, with eyes wide open, round, stupid, unwinking.

He seemed to be watching the American as a bird watches a snake, and Angus Kerr smiled at the thought that the stranger was perhaps afraid of him, possessed perhaps that power, quality rather, of fear—and hope—for prescribing which the old Scotch doctor had tried to charge him five hundred dollars.

At all events the man was wide awake, and he would have a chance now to read.

"Pardon me, Monsieur," he said in his exact, heartily Anglo-Saxon French. "Would you mind if I pull up the lamp curtains? I would like to read."

The other did not reply. He kept on staring fixedly at the American.

The latter shrugged his shoulders. He was used to the sudden boorish moods of the most polite nation in the world.

"All right," he said gruffly. "Don't talk if it hurts you," and he rose, reached up, and slid the lamp shade to one side. Flickering, greenish, unhealthy light rays stabbed through the brown gloom of the compartment.

He sat down again, lit a cigar, and opened his book.

But, somehow, his eyes wandered away from the printed page and back to the stranger who sat there, immobile, still staring out of his round, stupid, unwinking eyes, and Angus Kerr found a certain pleasure in returning the stare. It seemed like a battle of patience as to who would look away first—and he had always been blessed with a full working measure of stubborn obstinacy.

He stared till his head swam and his eyes smarted and burned.

Presently he had a curious impression as if the other's eyes were filling the compartment, were enveloping him as with a moist, woolen blanket.

He seemed to breathe those eyes—to taste them with the tip of his tongue. . . .

Then an idea wedged itself into his consciousness—sudden though half expected, even half hoped, with a faint undertow of uneasiness. It seemed unreal and disjointed, and he thought that, perhaps, it had nothing to do with the actual situation by which he was confronted, but was only a mental result of Doctor Macdonald's advice.

But he acted on it.

"Monsieur!" he called.

There was no answer. The round eyes did not wink.

"Monsieur! Monsieur!" Kerr raised his voice.

Then, as the eyes stared as before, he leaned forward in his seat and touched the stranger on the knee. At that very instant—he had not noticed it before, not consciously noted it—he thought it odd that the other, in spite of the heat, was wrapped in his heavy fur coat.

The man's knees jerked grotesquely, woodenly, under Kerr's fingers. Something dropped on the floor with a dry, metallic click.

"Monsieur!" Kerr called again, quite loud this time. "Are you sick?"

Still there was no answer, no change in the expression of those flat, stony eyes, and Kerr rose.

He stepped across, bent, and slipped his right hand between the man's neck and fur collar to lift his head to a more comfortable position.

At once he withdrew his fingers. Something cold and sodden had touched them.

He looked.

A little ball of blood, already turning black, was sticking to the nail of his right index.

He looked more closely.

Then he saw that the man was dead, that his throat was cut across the jugular vein—evidently a case of suicide, since there was no indication of struggle—and, quite mechanically, he wiped his fingers on the plush bench.

Angus Kerr was not afraid. He was fully aware of that. But the air about him seemed to have turned icy cold, and the compartment seemed to be freighted with a certain creeping uneasiness that had not as yet fully revealed itself. He knew that, for full revelation, it needed the lever of his own mind.

Even at this moment he remembered Doctor Macdonald's advice—he wondered if the Scotchman had meant it mockingly: "Don't sidestep it. Help it along if ye can," and then he saw that, in rubbing against the dead man's fur coat, which had caught the blood like a sponge, he had smeared his light gray trousers. Blood, too, stained his shirt cuffs.

He knew that he looked like a murderer, and he thought of the fly-specked glass slab above the bench which topped the wall that divided his compartment from the next.

Suppose somebody was watching?

The thought came to him. Still, he was not conscious of fear. Looking down at the corpse, he was not even aware of any stirring of pity or compassion.

He only felt envy.

For, studying once more the round, unwinking eyes, he read there an expression of sharp despair, and he said to himself that, at least in dying, this

stranger had lived through a moment of supreme emotion.

Angus Kerr raised his hand to pull the alarm cord, but he dropped it again. It would mean a delay of from fifteen to twenty minutes, the train would arrive at its destination correspondingly late, and his sister had wired him that she would meet him with the motor car. She was given to worrying.

Too, the train had five minutes' stop at Lapalisse: time enough to call the station officials and explain. There would be no trouble about that. After all, he was Angus W. Kerr, multimillionaire.

He consulted his watch and the timetable. The train was due to arrive at Lapalisse in thirty-three minutes.

So he sat down and lit another cigar. He watched his hand. It was perfectly steady, and, reading the sign, he suddenly thought that this apathy was abnormal, given the tragic, inert mass across from him, given the glass which connected with the next compartment, and given the treacherous, accusing blood splotches—he noticed that the floor, too, was covered with them and that there was one rather large pool of blood into which he had stepped. His shoes, typically American, were sharply outlined; there was no mistaking the keen curve from just below the arch to the square-cut toe.

Doubtless, success had atrophied his emotions; and he tried to force his nerves to tingle, and the only result was a yet greater calm.

He actually enjoyed his cigar.

Then, again, imperceptibly at first, there slipped into his consciousness the thought of the doctor's advice and of the fact that anybody entering the compartment just now would have good reason to take him for the murderer.

Gradually, the thought grew into a wish and—since, all his life, his success had been so great that he had never considered the possibility of a wish being thwarted—inside of five minutes it had changed into an obsession, into a perverted desire to be taken for the murderer and to feel as the murderer would under the hypothetical circumstances.

Dangerous? Of course.

But let happen what may as long as it gave back to him his faculty of fearing and hoping, of being like other people; and already Angus Kerr's massive, crunching brain was busily at work considering how he might help and further the hoped-for result.

He remembered that something had dropped on the ground with a little metallic click when he had touched the dead man's knee.

He looked, and found! He picked it up. It was a razor spotted with darkening blood, doubtless the instrument with which the man had cut his throat.

He balanced it on his palm for a moment, then he raised the window and threw it far out into the night. It would never be found again. The land was lonely, and the snow deep. Thus he had got rid of a silent witness which might have pointed at suicide.

Again he consulted his watch, and he saw that in nine minutes the train would pull into Lapalisse.

He would have to hurry a little and, calmly, methodically, with hands that were perfectly steady, he went through the dead man's pockets and emptied them of their contents: a few illegible pencil scrawls on scraps of paper, a railway ticket, three visiting cards, each with a different name and doubtless the cards of business or social acquaintances, a purse well filled with money, and a Swiss half-hunter gold watch initialed *M. H. D.*

He tore up the scraps of paper, the visiting cards, and the railway ticket and threw the pieces out of the window where the wind sucked them into the dark.

He was about to do likewise with the purse and the watch when he reconsidered. After all, his mind worked on a logical basis, even in a hypothetical and imagined situation. If murder had happened, since he had not known the dead man personally and could not have been influenced by reasons of ven-

geance, he must have committed it for motives of robbery.

So he dropped the valuables into his trousers pocket.

Then, obeying an impulse which he did not have to time to dissect—an impulse closely resembling his sudden, instinctive decisions in business conferences—he dipped his right hand in the pool of blood and pressed his fingers against the walls and the window.

The very next moment the whistle blew. There was a thundering rush as the train pulled into Lapalisse station—and, at exactly the same infinitesimal fraction of a second, Angus Kerr became aware of four distinct emotions:

There was, first, a gush of uncontrollable elation; there was, second, a sudden sense of ultimate horror, starkly revealed, that seemed to choke the pulse beats in his heart and touch his spine with clay-cold hands; there was, furthermore, a dull and hopeless regret that he had done this mad thing; and there was, finally, his calm, deliberate decision that he must see the thing through—that he must save himself.

It had come to that. He knew it.

Momentarily he thought of telling the station master exactly what had happened—that he had acted under the whip of a crazy impulse. But nobody would believe him, though he was Angus Kerr. This was not America. This was a foreign land, France. Too, he had been overthorough. There were his red finger prints on the walls and the window, and the very fact that he had no weapon, that he had even thrown away the razor, would go far toward convicting him. For, basing his opinion on indirect logic, any detective worth his salt would conclude that he had thrown away the weapon on purpose so that it could not be identified as his property.

Perhaps, after all, it would be better to get rid of the purse and the watch. They seemed to burn the skin of his thigh. But it was too late. The train had come to a halt. He could not drop them in the compartment. They, too, bore his finger prints.

Five minutes' stop!

Angus Kerr, master of his nerves—but master with an effort, not through instinct—stood in front of the compartment door, shielding the body that sprawled grotesquely on the bench.

He waited a minute—two—three—four—five—and he opened the door and jumped on the platform just as the station master blew the whistle for departure.

III

GRIP in hand, he hurried to the gate. *"Votre billet, Monsieur!"* demanded the gate keeper; and Kerr gave him his ticket which read: "Paris—Clermont, Puy de Dôme."

"You have made a mistake, Monsieur," said the gate keeper, "you are bound for Clermont. This is Lapalisse."

"I know. I have decided to stop off here."

"But this is a through ticket. It carries no stop-over privilege."

"I know that. But I'll stop over just the same."

"But, Monsieur," exclaimed the official, "you will be out of pocket nearly ten francs by stopping over and surrendering your ticket!"

"I guess I can afford it;" and even as he passed through the wicket Kerr realized that to the frugal French mind the calmly accepted loss of ten francs would appear a suspicious circumstance, would cause the gate keeper to take a good look at him and to remember him—in case . . .

Kerr felt again a gush of elation that seemed to touch a certain spring deep within him and that brought a burst of uncontrollable laughter up in his throat. It blew from his lips before he could get his hand to his mouth.

"Monsieur, Monsieur—what . . ." the gate keeper voiced his astonishment.

But already Kerr was out on the deserted streets of Lapalisse.

The snow came down like hissing spears, and he breathed in the crisp air with satisfaction as he turned toward the hotel which advertised its presence

with deep-set windows blinking against the white night and with the snug flames of open hearths reddening the tiny panes.

Then a reaction set in, a sudden disillusionment. For, again watching his hand, he saw that while it trembled it did so through cold, not through nerve shock, and he felt like an actor who is rehearsing his role in front of the mirror and who, without the footlights, the audience, the humming, the applause, sees in his gestures nothing except wooden and ridiculous incoherency.

He criticized himself. He was convinced that he had failed.

He tried to argue with himself, to tell himself that it was the inner conviction of his innocence which was shielding him against surrender to fear, with the unlooked for result that even his last, faintly fluttering nerve steadied.

He had been a fool. All he had accomplished was to have missed his train. His sister would worry, and he would spend a miserable night in a draughty, dirty, provincial hotel.

He would make the best of it.

He entered the lobby of the hotel.

"A room, please," he demanded of the sleepy, frowzy woman behind the counter.

She pushed the register toward him. He signed, and she gave him a key.

"Room 49. Monsieur will be able to find it alone? It is just behind the coffee room."

"Thank you. When does the first train leave?"

"For Paris?"

"No. For Clermont in the Puy de Dôme."

She consulted the time-table.

"At seven in the morning, Monsieur."

"All right. Please have me called in time."

"Good, Monsieur. Good night."

"Good night, Madame."

He found his room, washed the blood from his trousers and his cuffs as well as he could, and went to bed. His last thoughts, just before he fell asleep, were not of the experience through which he had lived and which he had helped along, but of the business deal which he had successfully wound up in Paris. He had no dreams, and it seemed only a few minutes later that a dull, hollow sound waked him and brought him up sitting.

Ban-ng—ban-ng—

He rubbed his eyes. The first things he saw were his trousers with the washed-out blood spots still showing moist and brown, the shirt cuffs limp and sodden and grayish, the dead man's purse and watch which had tumbled from his pocket on the floor. . . .

Ban-ng!—and a high-pitched, metallic French voice which seemed excited:

"Monsieur! Monsieur! O, the Monsieur of Number 49!"

And right then, with an amazing and, somehow, blundering swiftness, fear rushed upon Angus Kerr full-armed. Fear positively swallowed him, and, with stricken heart and parched tongue, he listened to the knocking at the door and the excited call:

"Monsieur! Monsieur! O, the Monsieur of Number 49!"

The police—already—was his first thought. His second was to curse the old Scotch doctor. His third to search his heart for a fluttering of elation, of satisfaction. There was none. There was only fear, dry, sharp, yellow as a dead man's bones.

He asked himself what the real murderer would do, found the answer, and suited his action to it. He tumbled out of bed, picked up the watch and the purse and dropped the two bits of incriminating evidence into the hearth, deep in the bed of gray, curly wood cinders.

"Monsieur!" called the voice again, and, a little apologetically: "It is half-past six. The train for Clermont leaves at seven sharp!"

And Kerr laughed—a laugh strangely blending relief and satisfaction: relief at the thought that his early caller was not a detective, but the "Boots"—satisfaction at the conviction that he had really experienced the complicated emotion called fear.

"All right. Thanks," he replied,

steadying his voice with an effort, and he dressed, paid his bill, and hurried to the station.

The night gate keeper was still at the wicket. He recognized the American.

"So Monsieur has decided to continue his trip?" he asked.

It was the most natural thing in the world to say, and the man said it without the slightest noticeable inflection of his voice; but it happened to give the counter signal to Kerr's emotions at the moment, with an utterance that seemed to him mercilessly sardonic and cruel.

For a second, he was in a state of amazement and stupid terror that left him the helpless prey of his own surging sensations. Had a policeman just then touched him on the shoulder, he would most likely have collapsed without more ado and fainted.

Then his terror gave way to rage—a natural reaction since he was a strong man—and, passing through the wicket, he told the gate keeper to keep his d——d mouth shut—an injunction which caused the latter, sublimely ignorant of the fact that England and America are two separate nations, to mumble something decidedly uncomplimentary about *"sal Anglais"* and to turn to a nearby porter with an audible aside that these "so-and-so specimens of foreigners" bore watching.

Kerr heard, but his burst of rage had helped him to collect his scattered will power into a more definite attitude of fighting self-control—which disappeared like chaff in the meeting of winds when he entered his compartment.

For, facing each other in the corner seats, sat two men: one with the spade-shaped beard, the narrow crimson button ribbon, the immaculate high hat, the tightly buttoned frock coat, the pompously pinchbeck manner, and the black-gloved hands of an official of the French Department of Justice, the other a police agent in blue and brass and tricolor sash; and the first thing Kerr heard were the words, pronounced by the gentleman from the Judiciary: "Dead—the jugular vein cut—poor devil. . . ."

Then the two, seeing Angus Kerr, lowered their voices to a confidential purr.

IV

KERR'S throat felt dry. His Adam's-apple worked up and down like a mercury ball in a storm. Catching sight of his face in the window glass, he saw that it was deathly pale.

Then his inner resistance tautened. He decided that the best thing for him to do would be to get off this train at the first station, to catch a Northbound train back to Paris, and to seek legal aid before his case became complicated beyond hope of disentanglement.

He lit a cigar. But this time he did not enjoy it. He was smoking against time. He was smoking against despair, against the invasion of panic, against the thought reflection might bring that he was in a helpless situation—against anything, in fact, rather than allow his inmost fear to assume control.

When, a few minutes later, the train stopped at Vichy, he jumped out and caught by mere luck a train which just then was leaving the same platform bound for Paris.

It was a corridor train, filled with Parisians and a few Englishmen returning from Vichy for the beginning of the season, and the first thing that happened to him was a discussion with the conductor.

"Your ticket, Monsieur, if you please."

"I didn't have time to buy one."

"It is against the regulations to purchase a ticket on board a train. You must get out."

"Ventrebleu!" laughed a plump, comfortable bourgeois who was listening, "but Monsieur cannot get out. There is no stop before we reach Paris. This is the through express."

Came a lengthy wrangle between Kerr and the conductor, interrupted by jocular bits of advice from the bourgeois and finally settled by Kerr paying the full fare and giving his name

and the Paris address where he might be found—"in case," said the conductor ominously, "that the railway company should decide to make further and detailed investigation of so irregular a happening."

"Monsieur," he added, out of pure Gallic malice, promptly misinterpreted by the American, "you seemed in a most singular—I might say, suspicious hurry to board the express at Vichy!"

During the rest of the trip Kerr was busy avoiding the conversational advances made to him by the bourgeois:

"Monsieur is an American, I take it?"

"Yes."

"This is your first visit to France?"

"No."

"New Orleans is in America, is it not?" The man beamed, proud of his geographical knowledge; "also Chicago and San Francisco, *hein?*"

"Yes."

"Monsieur"—with a glance at Kerr's ashen features—"does not appear to be feeling well?"

"Yes—no—yes . . ."

Finally:

"Monsieur has a spot on his trousers. . . ."

And Angus Kerr, looking down at his trousers and seeing the washed-out blood still showing faintly brown, felt a touch of horror—a horror of fate, an outer horror this time, not an inner horror artificially stimulated by his perverted desire to be able to fear and hope like other people.

The train roared into the station and slid to a stop. Kerr was the first to alight. Evading the bourgeois' hearty adieux and the conductor's growling admonition that "the affair of the non-purchased ticket was very irregular and would have to be looked into," he picked up his grip and ran, impatiently waving aside the beckoning red hands of porters and taxicab drivers. He hurried down the maze of ancient streets that debouch toward the Inner Boulevards. People turned around and looked at him curiously. He noticed it, and shivered.

He wondered whom he should consult.

There was Kelly, the leading American lawyer of Paris, who had put the legal seal on many of his European ventures in the past. It would be unwise to approach him. Unwise from a business point of view.

He might telegraph to his sister. Her late husband had been a Frenchman high in office, and she had influential connections. But he did not want to worry her. Doubtless she was worrying enough now over his non-arrival at Clermont.

Or should he go to Carter Vanbrugh of Morgan Harjes, his Paris bankers? No. Vanbrugh would gossip at the clubs. . . .

What should he do?

He stopped for a moment. Then he felt a human eye stab him straight between the shoulder blades. He turned and looked. Directly behind him walked the plump, jovial bourgeois who had tried to engage him in conversation aboard the train.

The man raised his hat when he recognized Kerr. He bowed. He smiled.

"Ah, Monsieur—we meet again—" he began as he hastened to catch up with the American.

And the latter, the sweat pouring down his face, his heart as if squeezed between steel clamps, a hammer beating at the base of his skull with a dull, staccato rhythm, ran down the street, anywhere, slipping, bumping against people, while the Frenchman called after him:

"But—Monsieur! Monsieur!"

At that moment all seemed terribly clear to Kerr. He had been shadowed ever since he had left the train at Lapalisse. The gate keeper there—the hotel porter—the gentleman from the Judiciary and the police agent—the conductor—and now this man who was following him! It dovetailed completely.

He had played with the gamut of human emotions. He had played a ghoulish comedy.

But had he? Had he really only played?

Gradually surging from the secret recesses of his being, then coming to the top of his greater subliminal consciousness, there came the haunting, dark obsession that he had not played at killing, but that he had really taken a human life, that he was a fugitive from his own conscience and from avenging justice.

He tried to combat the thought, the conviction, but it burned deeper and deeper into his soul, tracing a painful, bleeding pattern—and he ran on, panting, cursing, stumbling, until somehow—and afterwards he could never explain if chance had guided his feet or if his subconscious intelligence had kept on thinking logically and sanely—he found himself in front of the American Consulate General.

V

He saw the flag and the great gilt bronze eagle, and he rushed up the stairs, two steps at a time, past the wondering, protesting clerk in the outer room and straight into the private office of the Consul.

"Spencer—for God's sake!"

"What's the matter, Mr. Kerr?"

Kerr's words came in a mad torrent, jumbled, hashed, bitten off, but the Consul understood enough to draw a newspaper from his pocket.

"Are you speaking about that railway tragedy, Mr. Kerr?"

"Yes. The murder. Between Dijon and Lapalisse."

"It wasn't a murder. It was suicide. Was the man a friend of yours?"

But Kerr had only heard the first half of the Consul's reply: "It wasn't murder. It was suicide." For a few seconds he stood quite still. His soul emptied itself of all feeling whatsoever as if by a sudden draught.

Then he asked, very slowly—fearing that he had heard wrong, hoping that he had heard right:

"You are sure it was a suicide?"

"Yes. There was never a question in the mind of the authorities that it had been anything else. Here"—he pointed at the newspaper—"read for yourself. They found the body when the train arrived at Clermont. Half an hour later, the Paris police long-distanced down there that the man had written them a letter telling them of his intention—time and place and method and everything. The paper speaks of another letter which the poor beggar wrote to his mother before he boarded the train. Asking her forgiveness—ill health . . . what are you looking for?" he continued as he saw Kerr's eyes roam over the desk.

"Pen and ink. Got to write a cheque."

"Here you are. Going to send a cheque to the man's family? Knew him, I suppose?"

"No. This is for my doctor in New York. I owe him five hundred dollars. Just thought of it"—and he signed the little pink slip.

He had passed through the gamut of human emotions—the elation of fear and—yes! a hope. And already his great, cold, slow-grinding brain was at work. Already he was wondering how he could change this precious gift into codified laws and principles to be used at will, when the mood was upon him.

He was sure he would find a way. He had always succeeded.

KISSES—the visiting cards of love.

AN OLD AND TRUE SAYING

By VanVechten Hostetter

I

JOHN THOMAS GRANT was a clean, sweet and simple-minded man. He occupied the peculiar position of one entirely unconcerned with the follies of the time. He did not sit up nights either to get drunk or to figure out ways of compelling other people to remain sober. His political activities consisted in voting the Republican ticket. He attended church regularly and occasionally passed one of the offertory plates. He held no congregational office, though he had been asked to do so once or twice. He never engaged in religious arguments and never wrote letters to the newspapers. He belonged to a lodge, paid his monthly dues promptly and attended the monthly meetings. Once reluctantly and from a sense of duty he had accepted a term as treasurer. He could have been president of the chapter if he had wanted to be.

The proudest day of John Thomas Grant's life was the day his children, John Thomas, Jr., and Mary, were graduated from high school. They were not particularly brilliant pupils and John Thomas Grant did not try to pretend either to himself or to others that they were. Mrs. Grant declared John Thomas, Jr., was the smartest boy in the class by all odds, and that only the favoritism and politics with which the public school system was honeycombed prevented his being the valedictorian. At which her husband smiled indulgently, knowing she would take the smile for one of warm approval. Had he been young enough or silly enough to argue he would have asked her what political influence Mary had been able to exercise to procure a better scholarship record than that of John Thomas, Jr.

For his part, he had no fault to find with the schools. The children had fared well, as well as they deserved. They stood nearer the head of the class than the foot. And they were his children. So he felt his heart swelling with pride until it seemed almost to pain. He felt it swelling again when he put the children and their mother on the train and sent them away, half across the country, to the shore. The only thing that could have made him happier would have been to go with them. But he could not do that this year. Next year he could easily.

Mr. Grant had a simple dinner and went home to spend the evening with his newspaper and his books. About ten o'clock he went out into the kitchen and found some bread and milk. Then he went to bed and lay there thinking pleasant and sensible thoughts.

Considering that he had begun with nothing, he had done very well. He had mastered his business; he was a sales manager and commanded a salary somewhat above the average; it was more than enough to provide a good home. He had saved something. Of course, sending the children to college would be a considerable expense—John Thomas, Jr., would go to Princeton and Mary to Bryn Mawr—but he was able to meet it. He was not yet fifty; he had fifteen good years ahead of him—enough to complete the children's education and see them established in life and provide reasonable comfort and se-

curity for his wife and himself when they were old.

With those comfortable thoughts John Thomas Grant went to sleep. In the morning he did not go down for breakfast at the usual time.

The maid, after waiting until his egg was almost cold, went up to his room and found him dead.

II

Mrs. Grant and the children hurried home in response to the telegram. Mrs. Grant was so overcome with grief that she could only sit in her chair and moan and wipe her eyes. Mary took charge of the funeral arrangements and John Thomas, Jr., helped her as well as he could, though he was not himself. Giving way to his sorrow, he would have to go to his room. Neighbors and friends remarked how bravely Mary bore up. When they tried to console her she wanted to say that a crowd of mournful women in the house was a nuisance and ask them to go away if they really wanted to help. Mary shed no tears. She seemed little affected. This intensified her mother's grief. Mrs. Grant said she didn't know what she would have done without Mary, but it did seem as if the girl ought to show more feeling for her dead father.

One would never know to look at Mary that she was bereaved, and somehow that did not seem right. She never had been a light-spirited girl, but she was as near light-spirited now as ever. Mary had been her father's favorite, too, though why Mrs. Grant had never been able to understand—so it was all the more strange that the girl should be so insensible to her loss. Mary was only seventeen and perhaps the realization would come later; still, Mrs. Grant thought, she was old enough to know that a girl's parents are her best friends and friends that can never be replaced.

Along in the summer Mrs. Grant and John Thomas recovered from their grief sufficiently to consider the family future, though their faces were still pale and drawn with suffering and Mrs. Grant still wept. Her mother's tears hurt Mary more than anything else, but she said nothing; there seemed to be nothing to say. She could not restore her father and time must console her mother. Sympathetic talk meant nothing to Mary. It gave her no comfort and it did not occur to her that it could give comfort to anyone else.

"This is what we have," said Mary, who had gone to her father's office and brought away his personal papers. "The house is paid for. It is worth six or seven thousand dollars. We could get five thousand for it if we wanted to sell it now. Four lots in the Elmwood addition. They are worth four hundred dollars and there is a two-hundred-dollar mortgage on them. When the Elmwood bridge and car lines are built—if they ever are—they will be worth maybe sixteen hundred dollars. The life insurance. It amounts to a little over three thousand dollars. It was ten thousand in the first place, but father borrowed some money on the policies. So we have our home if we want to keep it and three thousand dollars; that's all. Now what are we going to do?"

For a minute there was no answer. John Thomas, leaning over on his knees, stared dejectedly at the floor. Mary's heart ached for him. He was big and strong and had been so full of confidence and so free from care; his father's death seemed to have taken the spirit out of him; and now must come this blow. He had always talked and dreamed of university days. Mary had not talked so much, but she had had her dreams; still, she did not feel sorry for herself.

It was not easy to give up those school days upon which she had set her heart. She had read all she could find to read of college girls' life. She was not vivacious nor brilliant, but she had her own charms of personality and she was pretty in a delicate, modest way with her thoughtful brown eyes, deep if they were not very large, her abundant and gently waving hair the color of Swedish gold, her small, fine fea-

tures and her graceful, light and almost childish figure—so she had pictured herself enjoying a share of popularity and gaining some worthy rewards for scholarship when she should go away to school. But what must be must be, and Mary Grant was resigned if not reconciled.

"I don't know—I don't know," Mrs. Grant said helplessly, folding and unfolding her hands in her lap.

Mary's heart ached for her mother, too; Mrs. Grant had always talked of the handicaps against which her husband had had to struggle and had rejoiced in the belief that her children should have at least an equal chance with the rest in the world; the disappointment, Mary felt, was more bitter to her mother than to her or John Thomas. Still, there was nothing to do but help her bear it bravely.

"We'll get along," Mary said. "Really we are much better off than many. I know families that have been left with nothing. Think how much worse it would be if we had no home and John and I were children. Still, even then we'd get along some way. People always do. Now John and I are both able to work and it won't hurt us a bit, either; maybe it's better for us after all. I've heard of lots of boys that went through college and then never amounted to anything."

"Not boys like John," said Mrs. Grant quickly.

"No, of course not," Mary said; "but I guess John will not fail. They couldn't keep Papa from succeeding, and I know they can't keep John."

Mrs. Grant sat suddenly straight in her chair, her thin face set and her eyes burning again with the stubbornness that had taught her husband not to argue with her.

"No," she said, "and they sha'n't cheat him out of his schooling, either. John, you will go to Princeton, just as you planned. You can work in vacation and pay part of your way, and I can do something; I can sew. I'd rather work day and night till I dropped in my tracks than have you give it up."

"No," said John Thomas, still staring at the floor. "you won't have to work for me. I can pay all my way. It'll be hard, but I can do it."

"I don't think it's very wise, with the little we have," said Mary. "What if something should happen to us—to John and me? What would you do, Mamma? It seems to me we ought to put what we have away so you could have it if anything should happen. I could give up school. I don't see why John can't."

"You just don't understand," said Mrs. Grant with firm finality. "John is going to college. I don't care what it costs. It doesn't matter to a girl; it's everything to a boy. You're pretty and attractive, Mary. You can work in an office or do something like that for a year or two and then you'll marry and be provided for, but John will have to take care of me. I'm going to help him while I can."

"All right," Mary said. "I suppose you are right. I hadn't thought about marrying, but I guess that's what a girl's supposed to do. We'll go ahead and hope for the best."

III

Doctor Alexander Easterling hired Mary Grant on the recommendation of Professor Richter, the high school principal, and paid her ten dollars a week. In three months he advanced her salary to fifteen dollars and wrote a letter overflowing with gratitude to the professor. Ever since he had been able to hire office girls, he said, he had been hiring them and answering telephone calls for them and prescribing for them and all their relatives; Mary Grant was the first that had ever done anything for him.

Six months later Mary was earning twenty dollars and when John Thomas came home from school all the clouds that had hung over the Grant home were gone. John's scholarship record, while far from sensational, was one not to be ashamed of and it was a subject of pride for Mrs. Grant. John was not without prominence in class activities

and in the social life of the University. There was a possibility of his making the football team next season. Through the summer John meant to work, though his mother was not pleased by the idea. She wanted him to go back to school rested and refreshed. She had her way.

John found that work was not easy to find. Business was dull through the hot months, he was told where he made inquiries. He said he had supposed with so many people on vacations there would be places for extra men to fill. But it seemed that people had their vacations in the summertime because they could be spared. So John and his mother went up to the lakes and rented a cottage for a month and Mary spent her two weeks' vacation with them. John went back to school rested and refreshed, just as his mother had wanted him to do.

In the winter that followed Mrs. Grant became wholly her old self again. John was gaining popularity and distinction and Mary was making a place for herself in the business world. She was really much better off, Mrs. Grant said, than if she had gone away to school. She was virtually Doctor Easterling's business manager. She kept his books, made his appointments, professional and social, fixed the fees his rich patients must pay and saw that they were paid, made sure that bills were never sent to the poor. His professional brothers said he took his orders from Mary Grant and swore by Mary Grant. Also they tried to get Mary away from him, but failed. Mary refused liberal salary offers without ever mentioning them to the doctor. By so doing she lost nothing. Doctor Easterling, too, was liberal and he was appreciative. Occasionally he received good advice regarding investments and this he shared with Mary.

Mary and her mother lived modestly and Mary's earnings maintained the house. School was more expensive than they had supposed it would be for John. Once or twice Mary suggested that a student in his circumstances should forego participation in some activities, but that was hard to do and she had not insisted. There really was no reason to insist; John would soon finish now and could quickly repay the money he had been forced to borrow from his mother. Besides, Mary's own savings were more than John's borrowings and they would always be at her mother's disposal if she should need them.

John's student successes, too, kept Mrs. Grant in a state of almost sublime joy, and Mary was reluctant to see her mother deprived of any happiness for the sake of economy. Mrs. Grant was always telling her friends proudly how well John was doing and Mary rejoiced in her mother's happiness. Mary was even pleased and approved when John went away for his Senior year, declaring his hope of entering a professional school. He wanted to be a lawyer or a doctor. It would mean more expense, of course, and the first years of practice were almost certain to be lean ones—but John and Mary were both young and Mary had her savings, which were accumulating and growing.

Then came young Doctor Harley Pelton to Doctor Easterling's office. Doctor Pelton had worked his way through the Jefferson Medical College and had shown rare promise. Doctor Easterling, whose profession was his religion, had welcomed the opportunity to serve the young man and himself at once. Doctor Easterling had not forgotten the bitter discouragements, the starvation of his first years of practice alone and he had no sons of his own.

In three months Doctor Pelton and Mary Grant were in love and Mrs. Grant, who had long since ceased to worry over her daughter's marrying, was worried now.

At first Mrs. Grant had enjoyed Doctor Pelton's occasional calls. The doctor was full of ambition and hope; he was full of boyish devotion to his profession and its most sacred ideals and full of boyish faith in all its traditions. His frank blue eyes had something inspiring in them and his jaw, which was not particularly strong, seemed to take

strength when he found himself at ease and talked enthusiastically, even impetuously, of the wonderful things he knew he could accomplish and knew he would accomplish. With his dreams and his eager ambition to realize them and his unbounded faith in himself, he was like her own son and in the absence of John Thomas he had been a sort of solace. He had listened, too, with real interest and sympathy to all she said of what John Thomas had done and what he meant to do. But when the calls grew frequent, when Doctor Pelton was almost a nightly visitor in the Grant home—then there was no more joy for Mary's mother.

Presently Mrs. Grant bore a constant air of dejection, as if her heart was broken, as if she lived in fear of some crushing blow. Mary wondered at this and worried, but said nothing. In such situations it had always been hard for her to say anything. Her mother surely would speak if she was in serious trouble. At dinner one night, when they had been talking of trivial things, Mrs. Grant said suddenly:

"Mary, Doctor Pelton is not the man for you to marry."

"Why do you say that, Mamma?" Mary asked in surprise.

"Because he has nothing but hopes," Mrs. Grant said in a matter-of-fact tone; "you'd only be marrying trouble."

"I don't see how I'd be marrying trouble if I married a man I loved," Mary said. "Of course, he hasn't a fortune, but I don't want a fortune. Anyway, he hasn't asked me to marry him."

Mrs. Grant's thin lips set hard.

"There is no use trying to deceive me," she said; "a person would have to be very blind not to see."

Mary answered with a touch of weariness in her voice that her mother did not perceive,

"I wasn't trying to deceive you. I was just saying he hadn't asked me. I don't think he will for quite a while, so you needn't worry about it now. He'll ask me, though, some time, and when he does I'll marry him."

"Never with my consent," said Mrs. Grant, her lips snapping together, her eyes burning. "I'll not see my daughter throw herself away if I can help it after I have worked and worried and saved and planned the way I have for you."

Mrs. Grant's voice broke sorrowfully as she finished.

Mary was unmoved.

"You won't be able to help it," she said with simple emphasis. "I don't think it will be throwing myself away, but if it is it will have to be so. I love him and I'm going to marry him—if he asks me to—and he will."

Mrs. Grant burst into tears.

"Oh, what will become of me?" she moaned. "What will become of me, after all I've given, after all my sacrifices and plans and hopes and struggles? This is a mother's reward—to be left alone and deserted!"

"Mamma! Mamma!" cried Mary Grant, going around to her mother's side. "Don't be foolish. I'm not married. There isn't a chance of my marrying for years. And nobody's going to desert you. You'll have John and me as long as you live and you know it."

"John!" wept Mrs. Grant. "John! How can I have John? He'll have all he can do to take care of himself for years. It's hard enough for a boy to make his way alone."

"Well," said Mary Grant, "you don't need to worry anyway, I'll never desert you. I'll never do anything, Mamma, that brings any trouble to you."

"Oh," sobbed Mrs. Grant, "if I could only know it was true! If I could only know it was true!"

"It is true," said Mary Grant. "It is true." Mary drew her mother's hands away from her face and smiled as she wiped her eyes and cheeks. "You run along now and forget your troubles. Don't let Doctor Pelton see you've been crying. Yes, he's coming tonight, but he won't come again. It takes a better man than he is to come between my mother and me."

Doctor Pelton came that night and sat in the parlor with Mary. Mrs.

Grant waited until after eleven for him to say good night. Then she went upstairs, leaving him there with Mary. In the dark hall above she lay listening, but could hear nothing. At last she gave up trying and went to bed. The clock downstairs struck one and two and three. Mrs. Grant heard the door open and close and then heard Mary slowly climbing the stairs, the balustrade creaking under her hand.

IV

In Doctor Easterling's mail was a note from Doctor Pelton. A situation had developed, it said, which necessitated his going away at once. He was sorry to have to leave so hastily, sorry to be unable to explain, sorry not to be able to shake hands again with the best friend he had ever had.

Doctor Easterling's straight lips curled in a contemptuous smile as he read it.

"It serves him right, the pup," he thought. "If he'd been a man he'd have stayed and fought."

When Mary Grant came to the office he revised his judgment. Her eyes were red and her face was drawn; the lines of her mouth were hard; they said her mind was made up.

"Poor devil," thought Doctor Easterling. "There was no use in staying."

Between Mary Grant and Doctor Easterling the name of Doctor Pelton was never mentioned. Patients were told simply that Doctor Pelton had gone away and soon stopped asking about him. His mail was returned to the post office.

From month to month Doctor Easterling observed that the lines of Mary's mouth were growing harder and the long lines in her forehead deeper, that she had gray hairs here and there, that she worked harder and was more competent than ever. He knew she was not happy and found himself at times sorrowing because she had not married Doctor Pelton. Then he would console himself with the thought that she was an invaluable aid to him. Still, if Pelton should ever come back for her he would willingly give her up. He wondered what had become of Pelton. He wished he knew where he was.

Sometimes when he had a minute to spare Doctor Easterling saw Mary Grant's pen stop on her books, saw her gazing hungrily far beyond her books and wished he could tell her where Pelton was. But he never heard from Pelton.

The next spring John Thomas Grant gave up his ambitions for the law and married and bought a farm in Kansas. John brought the first news of the marriage when he and his bride stopped on the way to their new home for a visit with Mary and her mother. Mary was not greatly surprised—nothing surprised her much—and, oddly, neither was Mrs. Grant. His mother was sorry John had foregone a professional career, but perhaps it was just as well, she said. Ethel, John's wife, was a pretty and lovable little thing, though of a poor and obscure family, and John, if determined to marry, could have done much better. Mrs. Grant was without serious regrets, however; John and Ethel were head over heels in love and happy, and happiness, she said, was the main thing, after all.

The newspapers did their best to make a celebrity and a hero of John Thomas Grant. They always did things of that sort for the home boys. They magnified John's intellectual attainments, athletic prowess and personal popularity in school. They published flattering stories of his sacrificing bright prospects in the East to answer "the call of the soil." They told how "a Western boy" was "transplanting a New Jersey rose to the broad, free, open prairies of Kansas."

There were some parties for John and Ethel, who were bashfully appreciative of all the pleasant things that were said about them and all the good wishes and fair prophecies. Mrs. Grant was radiant with pride and joy, seeming years younger. Mary, too, seemed younger; it was good to see John happy and good to see her mother happy. For

a while Doctor Easterling was afraid Mary would continue to grow younger and desert him, but after John and Ethel went away her old severe, rather stoical manner returned and the doctor had no more misgivings.

A few months passed and Mary went home one night to find her mother in tears. It seemed that Mrs. Grant had mortgaged the house to help John make the first payment on his farm; now her debt was due and John could not pay. Mary, who had wondered but had not asked how John was able to buy land, wanted to know why she had not been told before of this transaction.

"It's all my fault," said Mrs. Grant. "I was afraid to tell you. I was afraid you wouldn't want me to do it."

"It is your house," said Mary; "what I wanted needn't have mattered. I might have been able to help more if I had known, that's all. I can pay the mortgage, anyway, so don't cry about it."

Mary sold some shares of Union Traction stock at a loss and paid the mortgage. In the autumn there came a plea from John. He was being pressed for another payment on the farm. It was long overdue. He was threatened with a lawsuit, which would bring disaster at this time. He was a candidate for justice of the peace—the office could be made to pay more than a thousand dollars a year—and could win easily, but the people would never elect a man who couldn't pay his debts. He must have help or he would have to sell his wheat; he had hoped to hold the wheat, for it would surely go to $2.50. Mary was little affected. She thought John would be better off out of politics anyway. Mrs. Grant wept and wrung her hands. John had had nothing but trouble and now, after he had worked so hard and when it seemed he was to have his reward, he was to be ruined.

"I can't stand it! I can't stand it!" she moaned. "It's just breaking my heart!"

Mary sold what she had left of Union Traction. It was cheaper than ever, but she had clung to her little holdings, knowing the stock was sure to recover. She sent the proceeds to John Thomas Grant, who was duly elected justice of the peace. Mrs. Grant telephoned the newspapers as soon as the glad news came over the wire from John. The next day his picture was in the papers, with glowing stories of his victory.

In the spring John and Ethel motored up from Kansas. They came with a wonderful surprise for Mrs. Grant and Mary—a baby. Mrs. Grant could hardly contain her joy. The child was beautiful and Mary loved him. She had wanted children herself; she still wanted them. She played the mother to the new John Thomas Grant as much as Ethel and her mother would let her.

"I suppose you are going to send him to Princeton?" she said to John one day.

"I am if I can," said John.

"Well," said Mary, "if you can't maybe I can."

After they had gone Mrs. Grant asked at dinner one night,

"Mary, did you really mean it—what you said about sending John's boy to school?"

"Of course," Mary answered. "Why? What made you think I didn't?"

"Then you never intend to marry?"

"No. I will never marry. The man I should have married is gone."

"I'm sorry you feel so," Mrs. Grant said. "I asked you not to marry Pelton for your own good. It is pretty hard for a mother to have things thrown up to her that way."

"I understand," said Mary. "I didn't mean to hurt you. I know you did what you thought was best. It's all right."

V

Between Mary and her mother the name of Doctor Harley Pelton was never mentioned again. Mary stayed on with Doctor Easterling and prospered. John prospered in Kansas. Mrs. Grant grew old contentedly. One day, when Mary was at the office, there came a letter for her. Mrs. Grant, seeing the name "H. Pelton" scrawled on a

corner of the envelope, opened it deliberately and read it.

As she read her eyes grew hard and her thin lips tightened over her teeth.

MARY:

I am in the Municipal Hospital here in Omaha. I'm dying. They tell me I'm not and try to cheer me up. They don't know I'm a doctor. It's my heart. I've got a chance in a million and no more. Dearest I've made a mess of everything. I wish I could see you. Maybe I ought not to write But I feel as if I had to. I can't go away without trying to talk to you just once more. I wish you would come and see me if you can. That is, if you want to.

I married after you sent me away. I thought the responsibility would brace me up. I thought it would make a man of me. It was a mistake. She wasn't a good woman, Mary. I don't know where she is. I have a boy I wish you would look after a little if you will. Maybe you can do that if nothing else. Maybe out of pity if not love for me. My darling I think there's some good in him. If there is I owe it to you. Some people named Whalen are keeping him. They live at 212 Ordway avenue. Good people but poor and—they'll let you tell them what to do with him if you show them this. I love you.

HARLEY PELTON.

Mrs. Grant took the letter and the envelope to the kitchen and put them in the fire in the range.

VI

MARY GRANT died of pneumonia when she was twenty-eight, leaving some little property in trust to John Thomas Grant, 3d. Mrs. Grant sold her home and went to live with her son, Congressman Grant, of Kansas, "the farmer statesman." In a year she died, and above her grave her son reared a monument on which was inscribed,

"A Boy's Best Friend Is His Mother."

REVANCHE

By Michael Monahan

O LOVE, for years I followed you,
Slave to your lightest mood,
But now Time brings his old revenge—
The wooer is the wooed.

And all the pain that long was mine,
The grief, the sore delay,
The cruel doubt that tears the heart,
Are yours, my Love, today!

CREDULITY where a pretty girl is concerned is fortunately boundless. No one ever doubts for a minute that the scandal about a pretty girl isn't true.

IF your husband has been seen in the company of a pretty woman, if he tells you he still loves you, and if you want to do something novel, believe him.

HONORS EVEN*

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By Belford Forrest

People Appearing in the Play

THE LORD BISHOP OF MIDDLESEX
THE HONORABLE JACK DUNHAM
A FOOTMAN
LADY HELENA TRAVERS

The Bishop of Middlesex receives in salary Ten Thousand pounds per annum—a sum, it might be supposed, sufficient to keep in good humor the fair round belly of a Friar Tuck.

For the Bishop, unfortunately, it can be considered adequate only upon the popular supposition that at his death he goes to his reward. It is, perhaps, a bare living wage for a celibate, bnt in the case of a bishop with encumbrances, it is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. He, too, goes to his reward, but leaves behind him debts—to be liquidated by private subscription; a widow—to be granted by the State the use of an apartment in a discarded Royal Residence; and children, to be educated by a Society, or a City Company, or a charitable individual, it matters not by whom, so they be somehow educated, for decency's sake.

The Ten Thousand pounds per annum is wholly absorbed by the maintenance of Brampton Palace, for centuries the official residence of the Bishops of Middlesex—a vast accumulation of assorted architecture in a state of perpetual restoration, surrounded by acres of imposing park, a variety of gardens, and much glass.

Of these temporalities the reigning bishop is the divinely appointed steward; to them he consecrates his income.

As there may be among the readers of this little play those who disapprove of bishops and their palaces, it is, perhaps, advisable to explain that the Bishop of Middlesex, for all the princely magnificence of his surroundings, is quite poor. Like most of us—the good man is overworked and underpaid.

The Prior's Hall in Brampton Palace was originally the Refectory of the monks who built it. After the Reformation, having sown its wild oats, it settled down into a respectable senility as the library of the Bishops of Middlesex. It is a low circular chamber of exceeding solid masonry, and adheres to an extremity of the Palace like an immense mushroom.

The interior of this reformed refectory is the scene of our play.

Let us begin with the wall. It is seven feet thick, and was built (the authorities of course differ as to the precise date) sometime in the tenth century. Unfortunately we see very little of it; the lower

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half, in the days of the Georges, having been paneled with oak, and the upper, more recently plastered and washed a neutral tint.

But the windows are eloquent of their origin. Set deep in the exceeding solid masonry, they frown at us from above the paneling of Georgian oak—their noble Norman brows rigid with disdain. Naturally, they resent their association with things Elizabethan, Georgian, and Victorian. They are nine in number, in groups of three, and are glazed with tolerable modern stained glass.

The oft-restored roof is flat, and presents to our view a ceiling of nice, neutral-tinted plaster, ribbed with oaken beams of Elizabethan solidity that converge into a deplorable early Victorian skylight.

In the wall, on the left of the audience, is a gigantic fireplace, with wide, rounded arch and broad stone fender. Upon it, there descends from the ceiling with bell-like curve a canopy of carved stone. This is the contribution of a prelate of inherited wealth and title, long since gone to his reward. It is embossed with his coat-of-arms, together with those of his University, the Diocese of Middlesex and the Knights of the Garter, of which Order he was sometime chaplain. Moreover, it is further adorned by gargoyles with damnable faces that grin in perpetual derision at his successors.

Beyond the fireplace—up stage—is a massive door with huge hinges and heavy bolts of wrought iron, connecting the library with the Palace. Directly facing it are folding doors of a modern ecclesiastical pattern, that lead into the gardens.

Around the semi-circle are bookcases, with glass doors, rising atmost to the height of the paneling.

The entire floor is coverel by a dull red drugget, of which the monotony is broken by the usual rugs.

The furniture is very serious and ill-assorted. Before the fireplace a sofa of mahogany and unyielding horsehair make a grim attempt at a ccsey-corner with a very high-backed chair of almost papal importance. In the center of the hall is a large, highly-polished table with three draughty-looking chairs in attendance. Upon the table there reposes a complete set of writing-desk brassware, much admired by the donors, Sunday School Teachers in the Bishop's first parish and now, annually, his guests at one of the Brampton Palace garden-parties.

Over the table, there hangs from the ceiling a cluster of electric lights, beneath a plain green shade.

At the rise of the curtain no one is on the stage, which enables the audience to give this remarkable room their undivided attention. But not for long. The doors leading into the gardens open, admitting considerable sunshine and the head of the Honorable Jack Dunham. Having assured himself that the room is unoccupied, he enters. He is a tall, good-looking, well-groomed man, in his early forties. Hoping to play golf with the Bishop, he is dressed accordingly. After loafing about the room for a few moments, he picks up a book from the table and settles himself in the very high-backed chair, which completely screens him from the door that connects the library with the Palace.

He is hardly comfortable when the door opens, and a footman enters, followed by Lady Helena Travers. She is a well-built, distinguished-looking woman, thirty years of age or thereabouts. She wears a tailor-made coat and skirt. In manner and appearance she is the finished product of her environment.

LADY HELENA:

Please tell the Bishop, as soon as he is disengaged, that Lady Helena Travers would like to see him for a few minutes.

THE FOOTMAN:

(*He was a very promising lightweight until he met* THE BISHOP, *who knocked him cold in a free-for-all outside a public-house on the Whitechapel Road one Saturday night. He now wears a livery —his silver buttons embossed with a mitre—and is rapidly putting on flesh.*) Yes, m'lady. The h'ordination candidates are 'avin' a Quiet Day, m'lady, and 'is Lordship is addressing them h'in the Chapel. The service will be h'over shortly—owin' to luncheon.

LADY HELENA:

Thank you. I will wait. (*She crosses over to the open doors and stands looking out into the gardens. There is about her an atmosphere of trouble and suspense.* THE FOOTMAN *exits.*)

JACK DUNHAM:

(*Rising from his chair where he has remained screened and silent.*) Ena!

LADY HELENA:

(*Startled.*) Jack! (*Distressed at seeing him.*) You . . . here!

JACK DUNHAM:

It is rather quaint—isn't it! To tell you the truth, I was just beginning to feel a bit nervous about it—myself. Quiet Days and Ordination Candidates aren't much in my line. Awfully glad you're here. (*Shaking hands with her.*) Hardly hoped to see you until tonight at the Fitzroy's. . . . Didn't know you knew Kinkus—

LADY HELENA:

Kinkus?

JACK DUNHAM:

The Bishop. . . . That was his nickname at Charterhouse.

LADY HELENA:

Oh! I see . . . you're old friends.

JACK DUNHAM:

Not exactly. Our friendship is still in its infancy—it never had a chance to grow up. Met him for the first time in years last night.

LADY HELENA:

How strange!

JACK DUNHAM:

Oh! I dunno. . . . When we left Charterhouse he went to Oxford and I to Cambridge. Then the Church got him and Diplomacy carried me off to places where one loses interest in parsons and their doings.

LADY HELENA:

I mean it's curious . . . our meeting *here*.

JACK DUNHAM:

Hardly curious our meeting *anywhere* now—is it? Fate has been so good to us these three glorious months that I've almost come to expect you where you're least likely to be. It's fate . . . our fate.

LADY HELENA:

It does seem to be—doesn't it?

JACK DUNHAM:

Of course it is. Fate landed me at the Indian Famine Fund Dinner at the Mansion House last night, and that meant meeting Kinkus again. He made a ripping speech. We had quite a long talk. He seemed awfully fagged . . . said he wanted an afternoon's golf, and asked me out to luncheon today on the off chance of his being able to get away afterwards.

LADY HELENA:

Then he's expecting you—

JACK DUNHAM:

Possibly. It doesn't necessarily follow when one is invited to lunch that one is expected.

LADY HELENA:

Doesn't he know you're here?

JACK DUNHAM:

Not yet. . . . It's a matter of fact nobody knows I'm here—but you. I arrived too early for lunch and have been loafing about the gardens until I discovered this cool retreat in which to await your coming. Because, of course, it was to meet you—not to lunch with his Lordship—that fate brought me here . . . wasn't it! You might say you're glad to see me—

LADY HELENA:

You know I am.

JACK DUNHAM:

What's the matter, Helena?

LADY HELENA:

Nothing. . . . Jack, I'm going. I can't wait to see the Bishop.

JACK DUNHAM:

Oh! Don't go. Stay to lunch. Kinkus will be delighted.

LADY HELENA:

I can't. I *must* go.

JACK DUNHAM:

So soon! You've hardly arrived. I hope I'm not *de trop*. Honestly I'm getting quite curious. You forget you haven't explained your presence in the ante-chamber of the youngest, most popular and only eligible bishop in England.

LADY HELENA:

Don't, Jack—

JACK DUNHAM:

I'm only joking.

LADY HELENA:

I know—but don't—I'm very fond of the Bishop. You know how I feel about religion, but he's different to any clergyman I've ever met.

JACK DUNHAM:

He is a fascinating sort of chap. I realized that last night.

LADY HELENA:

I've been going down to Whitechapel every Saturday night for nearly a year now and taking charge of a Factory Girls' Club he's interested in.

JACK DUNHAM:

By Jove—that's ripping of you.

LADY HELENA:

And so I have to see the Bishop occasionally . . . about the work.

JACK DUNHAM:

Naturally. Why didn't you tell me all this and let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works —*et cetera, et cetera?*

LADY HELENA:

I didn't think it would interest you.

JACK DUNHAM:

But it does. Everything interests me that interests you—even factory girls and bishops. Ena, do you realize my leave is nearly up—that in a month I shall be on my way East again?

LADY HELENA:

Yes, Jack.

JACK DUNHAM:

When am I to have my answer? Oughtn't we to know pretty soon whether you are going with me?

LADY HELENA:

Yes.

JACK DUNHAM:

Ena, what is it that's holding you back? Is it that you don't love me enough?

LADY HELENA:

No, dear. You know that I love you. It isn't that . . .

JACK DUNHAM:

Then what is it?

LADY HELENA:

Jack, give me until tonight. I promise you . . . you shall have your answer tonight. (*The Chapel organ is heard in the distance.*)

JACK DUNHAM:

Tonight! Thank God! (*Kissing her hand.*)

LADY HELENA:

The service must be over. The Bishop will be out of the Chapel in a few minutes. I can't very well go now. . . . Jack, will you do something for me?

JACK DUNHAM:

Of course.

LADY HELENA:

Nobody knows you're here. Slip out into the Park and let me see the Bishop alone. If we are both here it means explanations and a lot of talk and my being invited to luncheon and all that sort of thing, and I don't feel like it to-day. . . . Come back when you see my car going down the drive.

JACK DUNHAM:

Whatever you wish, dear; it's all the same to me. (*Taking his hat and going towards the doors.*) Until to-night then—at the Fitzroys. . . .

LADY HELENA:

Until to-night.

JACK DUNHAM:

(*Kissing his hand to her.*) *Au revoir.* (*Exit.*)

[LADY HELENA *remains motionless until the door leading into the Palace opens and* THE BISHOP *enters. He is a vigorous man, about* 45 *years of age, of slight athletic build and medium height. He has an ecclesiastical face and a secular manner. Contemporary biographers would attribute his success to his "irresistible personality" rather than his statesmanship or erudition. He is quite human and unsanctimonious, and on good terms with all sorts and conditions of men—from kings to costermongers.*

He is wearing a purple cassock, with broad silk girdle, and a small pectoral cross of dulled silver set with amethysts.]

THE BISHOP:

My dear Lady Helena. I am so sorry you have had to wait so long. (*They shake hands.*) Do please sit down. I've just been talking to my Ordination Candidates . . . such dear fellows. I give them all the time I can these last few days before their ordination. How are things going down at the club? I wish I had time to drop in there as I used to—

LADY HELENA:

I'm afraid I haven't been near the club for over a month.

THE BISHOP:

Well, we always expect the season to thin our ranks. I rather think it would be a good thing if—

LADY HELENA:

Bishop, it isn't about the club I want to see you. . . . It's about myself.

THE BISHOP:

(*Instantly sympathetic.*) My dear Lady Helena—

LADY HELENA:

I'm in very great trouble, and if anyone in the world can help me I believe you can. . . .

THE BISHOP:

(*Very simply.*) If I can—you know that I will.

LADY HELENA:

What I want to speak to you about involves a confession that will, I think, surprise you.

THE BISHOP:

Would you sooner we went into the Chapel?

LADY HELENA:

No. I haven't come to you as a bishop or a priest, but as a friend and because I've implicit faith in you as a man.

THE BISHOP:

My dear child—

LADY HELENA:

I'm face to face with a problem in my life that I can't solve.

THE BISHOP:

Aren't we all face to face every day with problems that we can't solve—alone?

LADY HELENA:

It's my life's happiness that's at stake and the happiness of the man I love.

THE BISHOP:

You are engaged? I hadn't heard—

LADY HELENA:

No. I'm to give my answer to-night. But there's another decision I must make first. Bishop, what kind of a woman do you think I am?

THE BISHOP:

My dear, what a curious question. I think, as everyone who knows you *must* think, that you are one of the sweetest and best of women in the world.

LADY HELENA:

Yes, and that is what *he* thinks I am—but I'm not.

THE BISHOP:

What do you mean?

LADY HELENA:

My reputation's a lie—for years I've had no right to it.

THE BISHOP:

Your reputation a lie!

LADY HELENA:

Yes, a lie. At first I thought that everyone must know it—that they would read it in my face—but they didn't. It isn't very difficult to keep your reputation when you're supposed to be above suspicion. Nobody, to my knowledge, has ever even suspected the truth about me . . . any more than *he* does. Bishop, what am I to do? Must I *tell* him?

THE BISHOP:

Tell him what?

LADY HELENA:

Don't you understand! That there has been someone else in my life . . . someone to whom I gave—everything . . . five years ago . . . a married man—separated from his wife. I would have married him if he could have got a divorce—but there was no chance of that, it was all hopeless . . . utterly hopeless from the very beginning. My father was very fond of him, and after my mother's death he was almost always with us at Bickerthorpe or in Berkely Square. Somehow or other we managed to keep our secret. But our happiness didn't last—it couldn't. I haven't seen him or heard from him since he left England two years ago. You understand now—don't you?

THE BISHOP:

Yes—I understand. (*A short silence.*) Lady Helena, it is useless for me to try to express the depth of my sympathy for you in your present suffering. Could I do so, it would—I fear—be of very little comfort. There come times in the lives of us all when we are beyond human friendship and affection—when only God can reach us. . . . I'm not wrong, am I, in believing that your hand is in His—now?

LADY HELENA:

Bishop, if I ever had any real faith in God—I lost it years ago. When I think *now* of the God I was taught as a child to believe in—I want to laugh. . . . No, I haven't come to you as a penitent. If I made a mistake, it was an honest mistake—made in obedience to a law of my being that I believed higher and stronger than any other—

THE BISHOP:

How can you justify it in the face of what it is costing you?

LADY HELENA:

Can *you* justify the price that I am being made to pay and must go on paying all my life? If I tell the man I marry this thing, will he ever really forget it? And if I don't, can I ever escape the fear that some day he may find it out? I tell you I'm caught like a rat in a trap! It isn't fair—it isn't fair!

THE BISHOP:

And yet—for all that—can there be any real doubt in your mind as to what you must do? You can't marry any man and hope for happiness if you *don't* tell him.

LADY HELENA:

And if I *do*—how can I be happy? No man ever feels quite sure of a woman who has once made that mistake. . . .

THE BISHOP:

Oh, yes, he does—if he's a *good* man—and she is honest and frank with him about it.

LADY HELENA:

If only I could be *sure* he would never know—

THE BISHOP:

Ah! But you can't be. The devil's too clever . . . he seldom fails to let the world know what he's been up to. . . . Lady Helena, hasn't all you've suffered taught you this—if nothing else—that you can't *steal* your happiness. You can't steal it, because love's happiness is a gift of God—the God you say you don't believe in. To the stars he gives light, to the hills strength and to man *love*—and there is no real love but the love He gives and blesses.

LADY HELENA:

(*Rising.*) It's no good! I can't tell him—I *can't*. I'd sooner take the chance of his never knowing—

THE BISHOP:

(*Rising.*) What about *him?* Have you the right to take a chance for him on his happiness?

LADY HELENA:

I'm giving him the only chance I *can* give him of real happiness—the chance to never know the truth about me. (*She moves towards the door.* THE BISHOP *crosses to the fireplace and rings a bell.*)

THE BISHOP:

Is that your decision?

LADY HELENA:

Yes.

THE BISHOP:

(*At the door.*) I'm sorry. (*He opens the door and follows* LADY HELENA *as she passes out.*)

THE BISHOP:

(*Off stage.*) Lady Helena Travers' car—

THE FOOTMAN:

(*Off stage.*) Yes m'lord.

[*After a brief silence,* THE BISHOP *returns and sits at the table facing the audience. Obviously he is very tired and troubled. He leans forward, his elbows on the table, resting his head on his hands, slowly he sinks to his knees and begins to pray.*]

THE BISHOP:

(*Burying his face in his oustretched arms.*) Oh, God, help her! . . . (*While he kneels in silence,* JACK DUNHAM *enters from the gardens, and, seeing* THE BISHOP *in prayer, endeavors to retreat. But* THE BISHOP *hears him—and without rising turns his head and stretches out a hand in welcome. He speaks with his usual cheerful manner.*) Jack—old man, come in—awfully glad you've shown up—

JACK DUNHAM:

(*Embarrassed—but unable to keep from smiling.*) Hello, Kinkus! (*shaking* THE BISHOP'S *hand.*)

THE BISHOP:

(*Slowing regaining his chair.*) Sit down, old man—you're just what I need. Have a cigarette. (*From the pocket of his cassock he takes a silver cigarette case—offers it to* JACK DUNHAM *who takes a cigarette—and then, helping himself, replaces the case in his pocket. From the brassware stand on the table he takes a match and lights* JACK'S *cigarette and his own.*) I didn't know you'd arrived. They didn't tell me.

JACK DUNHAM:

Well, you see, I was rather too early for luncheon, so instead of coming

straight to the Palace I took a look round the gardens. They told me at the lodge that you were in the Chapel.

THE BISHOP:

Yes, talking to my candidates—awfully good chaps, all of them. It wrings my heart when I think what they have got to face. (*His manner fades and he speaks in a very tired voice.*) You laymen haven't any idea of what an uphill fight it is. . . .

JACK DUNHAM:

I can't say the modern parson is a man I particularly envy.

THE BISHOP:

There are times when it seems as though the Church were accomplishing nothing—that we don't really reach the hearts of the people at all . . . that we are just children playing on the seashore, building sand-castles for the rising tide to wash away.

JACK DUNHAM:

It must be pretty disheartening at times in a diocese like this—the East End would break any bishop's heart, I should think.

THE BISHOP:

It isn't only the East End that breaks my heart . . . down there in the slums, they sin, for the most part, openly—everyone knows what is happening next door. . . . Forgive me, old man, I'm afraid I'm boring you—

JACK DUNHAM:

Not at all. To talk is a bishop's privilege.

THE BISHOP:

Is it? I notice they generally *do*. The worst bores I know are bishops. . . . You mustn't mind my being a bit depressed. If you knew the shock I've just had you wouldn't be surprised.

JACK DUNHAM:

Something a bit worse than usual?

THE BISHOP:

Yes, something a bit worse than usual. It's the wounds we receive in the house of our friends that are hardest to bear. I've just had an interview with one of my workers—a beautiful and charming girl belonging to one of the best families in England. She's more than a girl—she's a young woman. She came to see me because she's in desperate trouble. (JACK DUNHAM *turns his head quickly as though about to speak, but checks himself—remains silent, looking straight before him, listening intently.*) For years all the goodness and beauty and happiness of her life has been undermined by sin—sin that has robbed her of her faith and honor—a wretched secret affair with a married man who seduced her five years ago. (JACK DUNHAM'S *hands grip the arms of his chair and his face grows rigid.*) And now there has come into her life another man, who loves her and has asked her to marry him and is waiting for his answer. She loves him and she daren't take her happiness because she's afraid to tell him that she's not what he believes her to be. She came to ask me what she was to do.

JACK DUNHAM:

What was your answer?

THE BISHOP:

I told her that she *must* tell him.

JACK DUNHAM:

She needn't. It isn't necessary.

THE BISHOP:

Not necessary?

JACK DUNHAM:

No. She needn't tell him—because he *knows*. You've *told* him. (*The door leading into the Palace opens and* LADY HELENA *enters. Both men stand in silence, looking at her as she comes down to the table between them.*)

LADY HELENA:

Bishop, Mr. Dunham is the gentleman I told you of who has asked me to marry him—

THE BISHOP:

(*Very much distressed.*) Lady

Helena— (JACK *signals to him not to speak.*)

LADY HELENA:

And I've come back to do as you advised me—

JACK DUNHAM:

(*Smiling.*) What has the Bishop been advising you to do—marry me?

LADY HELENA:

No. To tell you why I've kept you waiting for your answer—to tell you something about myself.

JACK DUNHAM:

What is it, Ena? Something very terrible?

LADY HELENA:

Yes, Jack—something you may not be able to forgive me.

JACK DUNHAM:

Does it prevent your loving me?

LADY HELENA:

(*Looking up into his face and trying to keep back her tears.*) Prevent my loving you? No, Jack.

JACK DUNHAM:

Then I don't want to hear it.

LADY HELENA:

You *must*.

JACK DUNHAM:

I *won't*. Why should I?

LADY HELENA:

Because some day you may hear it from someone else.

JACK DUNHAM:

And if I *do* I'll come to you for the truth. And I'll always remember that you wanted to tell me and that I wouldn't let you. (*He holds out his arms and she goes to him.*) Ena!

LADY HELENA:

Jack! (*As they embrace there comes from the Palace the sound of a very vigorous performance by* THE FOOTMAN *on the luncheon gong.*)

THE BISHOP:

Excuse me, I think I heard the gong!

LADY HELENA:

(*Reprovingly.*) Bishop! Bishop!

THE BISHOP:

Why, of course—I forgot—(*Raising his hand and making the sign of the cross.*)—God bless you, my children!

CURTAIN

WHEN A MAN KISSES YOU

By Charles Thompson

STRUGGLE fiercely at first, then appear to be gradually overcome by his superior strength.

Close your eyes and hold yourself rigid, relaxing a trifle if the kiss endures.

Take your breath in little gasps.

Let a variety of emotions flood your face: anger, sorrow, despair, joy—it is important that all of them be registered.

Struggle occasionally, as if to free yourself. Scratch and bite, if opportunity presents itself, but do not dig too deeply.

As he is about to release you, faint, if possible.

. . . . . .

If you observe these instructions carefully, he will kiss you again.

THE BOOK OF FOOLS

By John McClure

THERE was a man in Erzerum, a student of philosophy, said the earth was an elephant-egg.

He was crucified and burned with slow fire for heresy by the priesthood who knew through revelation that it was laid by a duck.

II

THERE was a man in Hongkong, an excellent inland-fisherman, adept at the netting of silver trout, went fishing for forty years in the China sea in search of a golden whale.

III

THERE was a Chinaman in Chang-Chow prayed for two hundred months that he might go to heaven, so as to be with his ancestors.

He arrived in heaven as he had prayed, but found no ancestors.

IV

THERE was a man in Limerick married a fairy.

She broke two sugar-pots and a broomstick over his pate, and narrowly missed him with a flat-iron.

V

THERE was a philosopher in Syracuse laughed till he had the colic because the earth swang so solemnly round the sun.

VI

THERE was a man in Ghazipur who was continually drunk, made beautiful songs to a street-lamp, believing until the day of his death it was that silver apple, the moon.

VII

THERE was a Chinaman in Pingyang inscribed upon his house, "I, Tee-Po, believe all men to be honorable, and shall not lock my doors."

His friend the grocer stole his carrots; his friend the banker stole his gold; his friend the jeweler stole his wife. Dying of a broken heart, he paid his friend the undertaker ten thousand yen to bury him in a silver casket. He was buried in a box.

VIII

THERE was a man in Karnak grieved himself into his grave because the world was old.

IX

THERE was a man in Rome made great pretense at philosophy. He stood in the forum, cawing ominously like a raven, to remind the Emperor Nero of his mortality.

He died first. He was carved into T-bones at a banquet while the knights and ladies drank red wine from golden goblets and the Emperor Nero lolled merrily at the head of the table, fiddling the tune of "The Four and Twenty Sailors."

X

THERE was a man in Cairo sang songs of a lady more beautiful than a moon-clouded night. His songs were very dainty. They were admired by Pharoah and the rhetoricians at Alexandria.

He was married to a woman with one eye and the jaundice, and became in time the proud father of four monkeys.

XI

THERE was a man in Jerusalem laughed himself to death because his enemy was run over by an ox-cart.

XII

THERE was a man in Quixada read stories of chivalry—knights, ladies, black dwarfs, and wizards—until they upset his reason.

He armed himself with a halberd, a broadsword, a coat of mail, and a blunderbuss, and, riding terribly upon a jackass, went forth to kill the writers of popular novels.

XIII

THERE was a man in Byzantium read the future in the skies. He saw the destruction of the city by earthquake and brimstone, the sack of the palace and the pillage of the churches, all of which was to happen next Epiphany Sunday. He had read it in the skies....

He lived to be a hundred and one. The children came every afternoon for forty years to see him sit in the square before the church of Saint Sofia, spitting cynically into the gutter.

INTERIM

By Margaret Widdemer

I HAVE a little peace today,
And I can pause and see
How life is filled with golden things
And gracious things for me:

I can go watch the water run
And smile to feel the air
And love the deep touch of the sun
And know the world is fair ....

Oh hush, my soul, take comfort now
And sleepy-singing lie
Till Love return to hide the sun
And veil the earth and sky!

ALL skulls seem to laugh. Perhaps they are thinking of the words engraved on their tombstones.

ONE always loves most the first time, but it is a good deal more comfortable the second time.

SATAN'S SISTER

By John Hamilton

SATAN'S sister advocated equal rights.

"I can prove that I am as clever as you," she said. "I shall go to the World as a homely woman and marry a handsome man."

Satan guffawed.

In a week she returned.

"A handsome man will follow me to Hell," she said to Satan. "He came into a room full of beautiful women. He looked at one and she smiled at him sweetly and spoke softly. Another pressed against him and half closed her eyes and parted her lips. A third led him out where the moon was shining and breathed against his cheek with her arms about his shoulders. He looked at me and I yawned and walked away . . ."

Satan made her his business partner.

IDEALISM

By Harry Kemp

A SEA that foams against untrodden sands;
A voyaged ship with high, sky-moving spars;
A casement opened by pale, hidden hands;
A hill lost in a multitude of stars.

NINETEEN women once sat in a room, talking. Ten were talking about money, five were talking about clothes, three were discussing marriage as a fine art, and one was trying vainly to get some one to listen to her while she told about her sweetheart. The first eighteen were married.

WHERE a man swears, a woman weeps. Where a man enjoys himself by roars of laughter, a woman enjoys herself with tears over the horrible predicament of an emotional actress. Where a man says, "You damned fool!" a woman purrs, "You dear!"

MATTIE GAMP

By Gladys Hall

I

WHEN Mattie Gamp murdered her next-door neighbor the countryside feli into a prostration. Mattie Gamp! We had, all of us, known Mattie Gamp since before she was born. We had known her all her life. She was the type one knows without being cognizant of the dry fact. She was an obscure infant, neither well nor ailing—rather moist and clammy. She was an obscure school-child, with light eyes and light hair and made-over, too-long clothes, and no personality. She was like one of the many pale hills over against the sky-rim. Or a part of one's kitchen-range. She was a sublime negative.

After a while she married, or *was* married. One can never imagine Mattie Gamp doing anything initiative . . . that is why her horrid crime was so astounding, so simply astounding . . . pale, pale Mattie Gamp!

I don't know whether she had any children or not. If she did they probably faded into the atmosphere entirely. Or stay—she did have, of course. She had *six*. That was it . . . they just came along like so many settings of eggs, and were not of half so much moment. In fact, they were . . . but avaunt anticipations . . .

Her husband, Luke Gamp, was pretty nearly as nondescript as she was. He was male, and she was female, and they just gravitated tonelessly together, I suppose, and were tonelessly married.

They'd been married fifteen years when Mattie murdered her next-door neighbor. *Facts* of a murder case are so repellent. . . . She did it with her hands . . . they always smelled of dishwater, but it never reddened them. . . . They were persistently *pale*. . . .

In Court, though, I noticed that they had reddened, a bit coarsely . . . and that her futile face had, for the very first time in its futile years, a color-tinge. Also her lustreless eyes attained a light . . . of a sort one did not like to look upon long . . . particularly if night were falling.

The countryside awoke from its prostration when it became known that Mattie Gamp was to speak in her own defense. Mattie, who talked in monosyllables . . . drably . . . generally about crops or canning. Sometimes she had a faintly querulous note in her voice, and that was its sole variation.

If Mattie had been interestingly dull—or homely—or patient—or *anything* . . . but she wasn't.

There are some clever back-country lawyers . . . but in her own defense . . . Mattie! It portended an immense tragedy back of the murder . . . this self-defense. . . . The people speculated. The fondest belief, not to say hope, was that Luke Gamp had "made up" to the next-door neighbor. That seemed the only plausible solution. Still, it was amazing. . . . But then, argued the countryside, one can never tell about a man.

The next-door neighbor, poor victim, had been far from lovely—she had been distinctly unlovely—she had been more aggressively unlovely than Mattie . . . but at least she *had* been aggressive . . . and one never knows . . .

To say the least, it was no more amazing that Luke Gamp should have "made up" to her than that Mattie, his

wife, should have murdered her. If one could have entertained any emotion for Mattie Gamp it would have been a nebulous pity for her drudging toil, and her inadequate strength. The next-door neighbor had been buxom, too—and Mattie had had to walk a half a mile . . . and all with her own hands . . . so the coroner . . .

A noisome brute strength must have crouched in that dull flesh . . . fed upon itself . . . and grew . . .

The day of the trial the blistering hot little courthouse was packed to suffocation. As people came and came and came, avid curiosity on their every feature, I fancied an added light in Mattie's eyes . . . I suppose it was my imagination which must have been taking on the hue of the whole affair . . .

Here and there a face . . . the victim's husband . . . somewhat terrified . . . aggressively aggrieved . . . not wholly tragical . . . the victim's mother, sobbing bleakly . . . the victim's small son, chewing gum . . . and hordes of avid faces.

And Mattie Gamp, with her same dress and her same hair and her same dish-watery atmosphere. About her thin, scrawny throat—it was just like Mattie—she had a silly string of beads—cheap beads—but perhaps one of the six had strung them expressly for her—out of some well-spring that was not issue of the Gamps.

The prosecution droned on for a solid day, with occasional flare-ups over some peculiarly offensive detail. Once the victim's mother fainted—she was very old. Once the small boy bawled aloud, and the cause thereof was hunger. During the day the victim's husband took on an apathetic look. I suspected that detail was dulling his perceptions.

Throughout, Mattie remained immovable. Once or twice I caught her eyes running over the craning sea of faces like a small, sly tongue licking dry lips. And that light in her eyes didn't abate.

No one slept that night for speculating on the defense. Everyone reckoned, and guessed, and surmised and imagined about everybody else. Skeletons in closets were conjured up. Everyone's next-door neighbor grew strangely different—they *might* be involved. Unanimous was the wonder over Mattie Gamp . . . a veritable white sepulchre . . . or a victim to a husband's infidelity . . . but at any rate worlds different than she had seemed.

Mattie Gamp, who toiled, and gave birth, and fed and lived on—unobtrusively, like a creature of a lower strata.

II

THE next morning Mattie Gamp took the stand. She wore the same things—she looked the same—just the same. . . . Luke Gamp was there, with sweat on his brow and dirt-clods on his shoes. He looked very unlike a Lothario. But then, says Kipling, white mice can love—or something like that.

The six children were there, too, ranged in a row, eleven months apart . . . unevenly alike . . . I wondered which one had strung the beads . . .

Mattie had begun to speak. She was saying the most irrelevant things—and telling them just as one might imagine she would, tonelessly. She was telling all about her childhood—the lessons she never understood in school—therefore the same lessons at the same time every day—and the work she did every afternoon at home—she was limited in her capacities, so she was assigned the same chore daily. She rambled off to something I couldn't catch about the prairies and cornfields and the pale hills that "didn't ever move." When she said that her voice acquired the querulous note, and I thought her very silly. Then she told how she got married—she'd forgotten just how it happened—and walked a piece up the road to Luke Gamp's place. The word honeymoon, or rather the implication, smote upon me suddenly . . .

She told about how she'd get up at four each morning and milk the cows, and feed the stock—then get the breakfast and wash up the kids and the dishes

and the kitchen floor, then get the midday meal, and wash the dishes—then do some picking in summer—and mending in winter—and get the supper and put the kids to bed, and wash the dishes and go to bed herself. She started to repeat that tale for each day in each of the fifteen years, but the Judge mercifully intervened.

"Well, that was all I ever done," she defended herself.

The Judge made delicate mention of the symmetrical six . . .

"Oh, yes, . . . *them* . . ." said Mattie.

She seemed disposed to relapse into silence. The hungry crowd was growing restless. They had not come for an itinerary of Mattie Gamp's days. They knew all that before. Their mouths watered for the motive—the sinister, tragical, adulterous motive. Mattie was ordered to sum up her defense.

As she rose from her chair and her eyes licked over the faces again, it was borne in upon me, incredibly, that Mattie Gamp *was having a good time!*

There was a tense, suspended moment in the stuffy courthouse . . . then rose Mattie's voice, screaming, banshee-like, whining . . .

"I done it fer something *diff'runt*, oh, Gawd!" she shrieked, "I done it fer something *new*—I done it 'cause I *had* to fer fun . . . yes, I done it fer fun—fer *fun!*"

* * * *

Of course she was committed—"hopelessly insane." But Mattie Gamp wasn't insane. She had "done it fer fun."

FROM A BOOK OF PHRASES

By Muna Lee

November

The leafless branches
Fall in long gray shadows across my heart.

Memory

My days whirl like desert sand
About a spring that feeds
One palm.

Dreams

Locusts on a field of rotted grain—
So my songs feed
On my dead dreams.

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

By Charles Reless

SHE would have sought a divorce had it not been that she disliked to air her troubles in court. And, too, she felt in a measure responsible for her husband's name, an honored one for three hundred years. It would never do to drag *that* name into a divorce court and cover it with mud.

She had been very patient. When on several occasions he had been caught in the act of making love to other women, she had dealt leniently with him. Instead of making a scene, she had led him away to the seclusion of their own home, where she had gently pointed out the wrong he was doing both her and himself. He was frank in confessing himself in error, and on each occasion had promised to mend his ways.

Perhaps he believed himself sincerely contrite. But he possessed a horrible memory, and his promises were soon forgotten.

She finally gave up in despair. In spite of all that she had done, her husband became more careless, more reckless. Yet, when she thought of the divorce court and of the stories which the yellow journals would print, her heart sickened, and she postponed the day of reckoning.

There had to be an end, however. It was not humanly possible for her to continue as his wife. Try as she might, however, she could not bring herself to file suit for divorce.

So she arranged a device on the stairs over which he stumbled early one morning, when he returned home drunk. He fell to the floor below and broke his neck!

The afternoon papers carried lengthy eulogies, and much was said about how happily the dead man and his widow had lived since their marriage, five years before.

SONG

By Eunice Tietjens

IN the little hills of Tryon
My love is hid away,
Fed on rain and beauty
All the April day.

Oh, love is big as doomsday
And stronger than the sea,
Yet the little hills of Tryon
Can hide my love from me.

THE TENTATIVE DEMISE OF MY FRIEND CREIGHTON

By Bliss Cutler

OUTLINE OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Creighton, a student of women, is desirous of determining which one of the numerous fair creatures with whom he has had affairs truly loves him. To this end, he hits upon the plan of going abroad and sending back news that he has lost his life. He takes his closest friend, the teller of the story, into his confidence and bids the latter record for him what happens upon receipt of the news.

PART II

THE diversion attendant upon Creighton's preparation for his departure and subsequent demise must have dulled our senses to the utter folly of it all. When he was actually gone and the steamer was out upon the real sea, and not one of my imagination, I began to feel very differently about the whole affair. It could have only been the force of his own determination that had swept me on through the preliminary action of the most senseless adventure of which I believe a sane man ever conceived,—and the most unnecessary, it seemed to me, considering the object to be obtained.

It was some days before I could sit before the fire without the feeling that it was all a nightmare, and that Creighton must shortly step in from the adjoining chamber, and Peter with silent tread place a tray of tinkling glasses upon the table. But it came—the revulsion of the normal brain from the abnormalities of its erratic fellow, and left me thoroughly angry at Creighton, and wholly disgusted with myself and the part I had undertaken to play in this bizarre comedy or tragedy—whichever it might prove to be.

There was one thing that I then and there determined,—that if he ever turned up again, Creighton would have to swear by all the oaths of the Koran and the Book of Moses, never to divulge my part in the affair, or that I ever even suspected his intentions. As for Peter, his abrupt and certain death I resolved should alone stand between him and a padded cell, no matter what the outdone of Creighton's experiment.

It was along about the twentieth of November that I saw Creighton off and responded to his wave of farewell as the huge boat glided away from the wharf into the deeper water of the channel. Allowing for possible delays, his demise should be pulled off by not later than the seventh of the month following.

That day passed however with no word from across the sea, and likewise the next and the next, and as others also passed, the subject ceased to blot out all other thoughts, and I began to look upon the whole affair as a witless joke of Creighton's, if not a hallucination of my own brain.

And then one evening while I was dining comfortably at the club—the thing arrived. A maroon-clad attendant quietly held it out to me on a silver tray.

My cue had come.

It was like a dream, the setting of the stage, the lights, the soft tread of the waiters and the subdued voices about me, and—Dillingworth in the chair opposite.

Dillingworth is a short, puffy, bald-headed person, of great fecundity of words, a person whom one takes out for dinner once in a while in a desperate last resort against ennui. For shear fussiness of intellect he would make Count Saint-Simon look like a cheap glass imitation. According to Creighton's test for breeding he could scarcely have qualified for anything save a live stock show. His chief asset was a father, now deceased, but who had once been a Senator and the Dean of the Club, in memory of whom the present Dillingworth had been admitted to membership and was tolerated as a convenient vocal bulletin of current events.

I tore open the envelope with impatient nonchalance, as becomes one properly annoyed at being thus interrupted at dinner in the privacy of his club.

"My God!" I ejaculated under my breath, in a horror not altogether simulated.

Seeing the words in cold type sent the chills for a moment down my spine. I recovered and let my jaw hang down, like that of the ventriloquist's dummy.

Then I slowly passed the slip of paper across the table.

It was my fortune that Dillingworth happened to be the only unoccupied member in the lounging room when I came in, and was thus dining with me that evening. I handed him the message and he did the rest. Within fifteen minutes he had spread the news about the club and 'phoned it, on the quiet as inside information, to half a dozen newspaper offices.

For the next week I had only to hand out the latest cablegrams from Peter—too oppressed by my grief to talk about the catastrophe. And Peter was playing his part—if it was indeed a part—with the master touch of genius. His cablegrams came for the better part of a week with the regularity of bulletins, telling me of the efforts he was making to find the body.

One of the newspaper articles,—cablegraphic news from their own correspondent on the ground, told how Creighton's valet in his haste and anxiety to help in the lowering of the boat, had seized the ropes from the hands of a sailor and let them slip through the toggle, precipitating the boat bow-on into the water, and causing a five minutes' delay.

Even then, the report stated, the sailors might have got away in time to have saved the man overboard, but as the boat shoved off the valet, crazed with grief, had sprung from the rail and landed on the end of the center thwart with such force as to capsize the crew, and was himself rescued only with difficulty.

Poor Peter. For his genius and zeal he suffered the anathemas of countless readers, and his subsequent disappearance was afterwards accounted for by his supposed terrible grief at the blunders he had made in his misguided efforts to save his master. Indeed, he played his part with such consistency that I was compelled againt my inner prompting to waive the padded cell.

And then followed the day of waiting. The only clue as to whether Creighton was really alive rested for me in Peter's disappearance, though oddly enough in the minds of his friends and the world at large it was taken as conclusive of Creighton's untimely death in the waters of the blue Mediterranean.

By the end of the first week the affair had begun to get on my nerves, and amid the growing horde of friends which had seemed to spring up like mushrooms overnight, Creighton was fast acquiring one determined enemy.

Being god-father to a corpse is a bit trying at the best, but I could have stood for that with some equanimity had there not been other things against which I balked at last. I could manage to avoid the elevator man by climbing nine flights of stairs, though I could not evade the care-woman save by coming

home after midnight and getting off before five thirty in the morning, and this did not leave me much time for sleep.

I had never known before what a universal catastrophe drowning had become during the past six generations. I got to classifying my acquaintances into two groups—those who had a relative or friend who had at least drowned once, or who knew a friend who had a friend who was drowned—and those who had not; and the latter would not have made a quorum at a Methodist prayer meeting.

And the number who took infinite pains to describe to me their last meeting with Creighton, at which I was assured he looked "as natural as life," and who never for a moment dreamed that that meeting was to be their last, would make the Polo Grounds look crowded.

But the worst of all was the handshaking. Why people who never shake hands on other occasions have to do so every time they ask about a dead friend, or meet at a funeral or a political convention, I have never been able to comprehend. I have made this senseless American custom a study—but without coming to a solution. For weeks and months, as the close friend and confidant of a man whose corpse persistently refused to turn up and be put properly away, I was shaken by the hand until my muscles became comatose and my temper virulent.

Dillingworth had got it all—the "close friend and confidant" idea and my occupying deceased's former apartment—into the paper as Creighton had wanted it and as I had worked it into his plastic intellect through a course of champagne cocktails. I had done all that had been by me agreed to be done and I could do nothing more, perforce, but await the *dénouement*.

It was late in the afternoon and the sun had already set behind a murky sky, and the streets below were crowded with hurrying feet. I had finished the day's work and was sitting solemnly in my office chair, trying to forget that in a few hours it would be Christmas Eve. As at this time for many years a sense of loneliness lay heavily upon me. Occasionally I had accepted invitations for the Christmas festivities, but somehow I felt out of place, and so I had come to spending the night and day at the club.

If there is a more lonesome and fruitless place to spend Christmas than a man's club, the record of its existence has long been destroyed. If he is a family man stranded there, he grows maudlin trying to describe his feelings, or worse in trying to drown them, or else he storms about in a beastly temper, and is insufferable in either case. And the few bachelors who can find no other place to go, move about with a hang-dog leer and eye each other with suspicion and contempt. The food tastes abominably and the cigars bite the tongue, and the magazines tell of nothing but home and fireside. You play dominoes or cards under protest and the wine sours on your palate. Even the servants wear an air of offensive tolerance and you feel in your heart that they despise you as a man without friends or home on this day when even the yellow cur of the street is welcomed at some hovel and shied a Christmas bone.

Something of this was driving the chill horrors to the marrow of my being, as I sat there vaguely contemplating the approaching evening and the morrow, when the care-woman put her head through the doorway from the main office, and said that there was a lady out there asking for me.

"A lady?" I asked dazed. The time was late for ladies to be coming to office buildings.

"She is a loidy, sorr," she retorted with some asperity.

"Tell her to come in," I commanded, and busied myself arranging my desk for departure, to indicate to the visitor that the interview must be brief.

II

She entered so quietly that she was standing beside the desk before I was

aware of her presence. When I did look up I struggled to my feet with a thousand apologies on my dumb lips and managed to secure a chair for her with bungling politeness.

It was the face that I had told Creighton that, having once seen, I should never forget. My embarrassment was so obvious that she could scarcely help regarding me with heightened color, and an expression of vague surprise in her soft eyes.

"You are the Mr. Laughton who was the close friend of Mr. Creighton?" she asked uncertainly.

I managed to bow an assent.

"And you are occupying—his former apartments."

She seemed to be feeling her way as one puts forth a hesitating step along a strange path.

"Yes."

I tried to say it reassuringly, though I was conscious that I was not helping her at all as a gentleman might. And then it suddenly dawned upon me that I had not for a moment taken my eyes from her face, but had been staring like a country yokel. I looked hastily away and fumbled with some papers on my desk. She evidently took my action as an expression of polite impatience, for she said quickly.

"I tried to get your apartments by telephone, but could get no answer, and decided to come to your office. I will keep you but a minute. It is just a little favor I thought—I fancied you might be willing to do for me."

When I again glanced up, her momentary confusion had disappeared, and there was about her eyes and lips the appealing touch of wistfulness of the photograph.

"I shall be only too glad to be of any service within my power—to—to a friend of Creighton's," I ended lamely.

I was conscious that I was blushing like a school girl.

"It is this—a fancy which you may perhaps think strange—but Mr. Creighton was a very dear friend of mine, and —this is Christmas Eve—"

I nodded encouragingly. She hesitated and drew something from a paper carton.

"—and the fireplace, you know, in the sitting room? I wanted to ask you if you would mind hanging this wreath of holly there—from the mantel shelf? I had a fancy somehow," she went on more quickly, "that he might like me to do it. The last Christmas Eve—we were together, and the memory of that—and of—him—" her eyes grew moist, but she looked up at me bravely. "You do not mind?"

I stood up from my chair so suddenly that she drew back.

"It is so late that you can hardly have a dinner engagement," I said hoarsely.

She did not take her startled eyes from mine, and hastily assuming an admission, without giving her a chance to answer, I said, "Very well, then you will dine with me this evening. We will find some retired place, if you prefer. And afterwards, you—you will hang the wreath at the fireplace—yourself."

I think that it was mute gratitude that slowly lowered her lashes, but I did not stop to notice, for I was getting into my street coat. A few snow flakes were floating softly downward when we reached the pavement, and I guided her with my protecting arm to the nearest taxicab—through the hurrying throngs of people and under the glare of the lights and amid the shouts of the newsboys and the clang of the car gongs—with a permeating exultation entirely out of place in a confirmed bachelor. But this was Christmas Eve. And it was to be my Christmas Eve—not some other person's, but *mine*, my very own.

I do not know where we dined. The name of the place is immaterial. But there was a retired spot amid some palms by the rail of a balcony, and a stringed orchestra off somewhere out of sight, a table for two and snowy damask and glistening glass and silver —and Eleanor opposite, gazing at me from those baffling depths or smiling gravely with that little wistful twist of the lips—Eleanor in pulsing flesh and

blood. There was a rounded forearm gleaming bare to the elbow and the slim wrist, and slender intelligent fingers of which Creighton had not spoken, although he must have known them well.

Of all the things that happened in connection with Creighton, that little dinner that Christmas Eve — and Eleanor—glow within the circle of a spot light in my memory with a soft but radiant effulgence.

For some reason we both avoided mention of Creighton, although we were often on the verge, and it was with a recalcitrant sigh that I at last arose to draw her wraps about her and gathered up the paper carton inclosing a wreath of holly, and directed her steps to a taxi which was to take us to—to his shrine. I can even hear the slam of that cab door that closed on that little touch of dreamland wherein were Eleanor and—just I.

The care-woman had laid a warming fire on the hearth, and it was there that I left her, with wraps removed, standing before the blazing logs, when I went to my room. There I turned the lights full on, and, carefully avoiding the mirror and the cheval glass, sank into a chair and drew a cigar from my pocket.

What were my thoughts while the tobacco slowly turned to ash was partially recorded on the pages of that diary, but they were not all of a character that would pass the censor. Shame and disgust for Creighton—for myself even more—for the deception of it all, had no place even in sophistry to hide their heads. The brazen impertinence of it all to that woman quietly grieving by herself in the other room, alternately boiled and chilled my blood. Nothing but my most solemn promise —made to a fool to be sure, but still a promise—held me from bursting in there and telling her the whole indefensible truth.

When I went in at last the wreath hung from the mantel, and she was sitting couched back in the cushions of the big chair, her wonderful eyes reflecting the glow of the dying embers. She arose and stood before me.

"You have been very kind to me," she said simply—"and thoughtful."

If she had been crying, it had been very softly to herself. But the lashes of her eyes were moist, and their gentle sadness cut me to the very heart. We rode to her studio in silence, which was broken only when the taxi neared its destination, and then by my own pleading voice.

"I presume your day tomorrow is filled, but if it is not—?"

"I have no special engagements for tomorrow," she replied quietly, after a moment's hesitation.

"I had expected to have to spend the day alone," I went on, "but if you will let me—if you will have compassion on a lonely bachelor and let me—in Creighton's name," I put in shamelessly, for I was growing reckless, "try to make it a Christmas, instead of just a day—"

I paused.

Yet working it through Creighton's name was a coward's throw and even my hardened conscience rebelled a bit.

"I am going to make a few little trips to some studio friends," she was saying, "and you may accompany me if you care to."

She said it very quietly, in a soft, matter-of-fact tone, a tone which bore that little note of wistful sadness. She offered it not at all as a favor, yet I felt that it was, from her—a very great favor. And a punishment which came near fitting the crime lay in it for me in the knowledge that she was doing it because it brought closer to her, through me, another whom I was at that moment murderous enough to wish might indeed be rotting at the bottom of the blue Mediterranean.

III

It was when I had got back to the rooms that Christmas Eve that I wrote in the diary. And what I said to Creighton required some six special trips to Roget's Thesaurus, so exhausted had become my vocabulary before I

had finished. It has struck me since that, although I only mentioned the fact of meeting Eleanor, my flaying of him must have amounted to an apotheosis of her love for him. But it does not matter, for Creighton never read it after all, and her silent grief was sacred to me.

It had been stormy during the night, but Christmas morning dawned bright and dazzling. I shall not tell of that day with Eleanor. It belongs to me, not to Creighton, of whom this tale is written. It was the most wonderful Christmas I had ever spent, and she the most wonderful of it all. I came to understand why Creighton had emphasized the femininity of her. It appealed to every fibre of your being, to the chivalry of your purest impulses—but at the same time it exalted your reverence of womanhood and left you strengthless to do aught but worship. It was after a morning among the studios with Merry Christmas greetings and tokens, and an afternoon in a taxi loaded with baskets in which Kewpies and turkeys jostled each other amid celery tops and toy soldiers, that we at last sat down beneath the bronze lamp in the corner of her own studio.

She had tendered me the use of her boudoir for my ablutions while she deftly produced from somewhere a supper. We had dined at noon with a gay party —of the choicer bohemians, I judged —in which she joined rather soberly, but where as everywhere she was treated as the tranquil princess to whom all paid a delicate and unobtrusive homage.

The chamber into which I had now been ushered was, like herself, more daintily feminine than bohemian—a woman's boudoir in its soft scented luxury. On her dressing case was a large miniature of Creighton. It was the only face in the room. I stood before it and cursed him for a fool without benefit of clergy.

It was after the liqueur and the cigarettes, when the conversation had momentarily lagged, that I asked the question, not on his account, but on my own.

"I have been wondering," I said gravely, "why you never married Creighton. He loved you, and I think that you cared for him, more than he knew."

She glanced up quickly at my words and serious change of tone.

"It is not impertinence, believe me," I protested hastily. "The question is prompted by a feeling of sadness—that what seems so befitting should not have been consummated, if I may put it that way."

She was silent for such a space that I feared that I had offended her by my boldness.

"He told me a great deal about you —and himself," I explained.

"There were times," she said slowly, at last, "in our earlier acquaintance, when I would have given myself to him, would have married him joyously and passionately."

She paused. "But at those moments it happened that he did not—that he did not know that I was within his grasp perhaps, even had he wanted me."

"But he wanted you," I interposed with conviction.

"Yes," she replied thoughtfully, "I know that he did at times, but he did not want me all of the time. I was not necessary to him, and I— A woman must be necessary to a man to whom she gives her all."

I was silent. I knew only too well that this was so with Creighton, that in that room to which I had fallen heir there were four other faces.

"There are five things which I seem to require for companionship for life with a man," she went on, herself in review; "Harrison possessed at least three of them. No other man whom I have known has had more than two. In form, in charm of manner, in the brilliancy and integrity of his mind he appealed to everything that was in me."

"But—" I suggested, after another pause.

"It is hardly so strong as that," she responded on a moment's thought. "Had I felt then that I was vital to him I might have yielded even at the time he

offered himself, and— But he did not *demand* me, and I could not explain it to him myself."

Again I was silent, while in my mind I stirred Creighton about in the crucible of my knowledge of him.

"I suppose," she was saying, "that had I been like most women, like I was myself in the beginning, I would have accepted him unhesitatingly. He was more my complement than are most men of most women who marry them."

She reflected for some moments. "I take it that the independence of a woman's life such as mine, its non-dependence upon others for its sustenance, makes us balance and weigh the real things with a keener sense of their relative values. Freed from the necessity of decision we become more acutely critical."

"And—motherhood?" I suggested gently, remembering her that afternoon with more than one little ragamuffin clasped in her arms.

"Please, don't," she answered quickly, with a sudden sob in her throat. "I know! It is a wondrous thing. I have thought of it—with Harry—with none but Harry. I have even craved it."

She arose suddenly and crossed the floor with restless movements.

She came back after a bit and stood by the table, one hand gripping the cloth. "It is something that must come spontaneously, like the sunlight through the parting clouds, and unfold like the gentle opening of the bud."

She sank into her chair and put her hands to her face.

"Motherhood," she repeated softly. "It is a marvelous, wondrous thing. It is the—the inspiration of divinity."

"I am sorry . . ." I commenced.

"No, no—you need not be," she interrupted me quickly. "It came," she went on less brokenly, "once to Harry and me. But he was too much of a gentleman, and I too much of a gentlewoman—we had been refined to the ultimate of convention—we were the products of civilization, not of nature. It could not have been otherwise perhaps.

"But the hour passed," she went on more quickly, taking her tense fingers from her face, and staring at the rug at her feet. "It would never have come again. If—if he were alive today, and were to even command me, I know that I would not marry him."

"Why?" I asked not unkindly.

"It is not for me to mate. I know that. I have known it a long time. That moment of exaltation taught me —myself. The sense of motherhood that came to me—it was a divine inspiration, a flash from the fountain head of the eternal. I could never make of it a convention—not now."

She arose.

"No, dear friend," she said gently, "for you have been that to me, last evening and all today—I must not, for my own salvation, mate as others do, and I cannot mate—as I would. It is just a sad, foolish fancy perhaps, but it is my very life."

And I knew then, as I know now, that she meant it—that there would never be any revocation. I left her standing there under the bronze lamp, with her back against the table and her two hands gripping the damask cloth at her sides, her lashes wet upon her cheeks.

I did not write that night, and it was many weeks before I filled in the pages of that day's calendar.

IV

Affairs moved along uneventfully for me during the next week. New Year's Eve found me with a party of club members making the rounds of the hotels and cafés, as is customary now in most cities. It was a dull evening on the whole, in spite of the noise. The women for the most part appeared overdressed in the figurative sense, too much dressed to enjoy themselves. They impressed me as being there for the purpose principally of being seen by others. They looked jaded, excepting in the cheaper restaurants where the levity was coarse and uninviting. I have never seen in New York that buoyant gaiety and spontaneity of

laughter and retort so characteristic of San Francisco, and Vienna and Paris, on a gala occasion such as New Year's Eve is intended to be.

Possibly I was in no mood for such things. I found myself through the evening keeping an eye out for Eleanor, but I did not see her. In fact, I had not seen her since that Christmas night. I had the next morning sent her a box of American Beauties, with a little note of appreciation for her kindness to me in my loneliness, and had received in acknowledgment simply her visiting card with the word "Thanks" written across it. But I understood and felt grateful that it should be so. Some of the sweetest and best things in our lives are only kept so by closing them to the lips for all time—by leaving them as they were.

Late on the afternoon of New Year's Day a club attendant brought me at the domino table a special delivery package, registered in the name of John Clayborn as the sender. I receipted for the same on the return card with great care, and then, on a moment's reflection, smuggled in the letters "O. K." at the end of my name. My opponents at the table offered some comments intended to be facetious about lady friends, but I dropped the package into my pocket without retorting.

I went into the library as soon as I could get away from the table, and opened it in the seclusion of a corner chair. There was no writing, just the little silver cross with the odd markings—and two little V-shaped cuts had been filed on each side of the lower shank. I slipped it into the pocket of my waistcoat, and burned the wrapper in the library fireplace.

The receipt of the little cross dissipated the cloud that I then realized more than before had been hanging over me in spite of the sense of certainty that Creighton had reached the shore in safety. It was pleasant to be definitely assured of it, however, and to feel wholly at liberty to damn him volubly and without compunction of conscience, for his indefensible asininity. So far his scheme had gained nothing for him which he might not have found out for himself by the asking, as I had done for him. I felt grateful for Eleanor, but I was not inclined to give him credit even for her. Every time I thought of it all in connection with him I grew red and disgusted at the deceit which we, able-bodied and otherwise sentient beings, had played upon her.

It was late in the month that I received by mail a note stating that the writer was an old-time friend of Mr. Harrison Creighton, and would be pleased to have me call upon her at the Ritztoria, if I could make it convenient to do so. The note was from Claire. She assumed apparently that my time was at her disposal, either as an attorney or as a friend of her friend —I could not be sure which. But I arranged over the telephone to spend the only period which we both seemed to have free, and which happened to be the dinner hour that evening. She suggested that I call early, which I did—a little after five.

I had not visualized Claire in evening gown, so I was not surprised at her street tailor-cut dress, though she kept me waiting long enough in the hotel parlor to have completed a dinner toilet. She looked me over with quick, keen glance, and I flattered myself not without approval. Her eyes met mine frankly and she extended her hand in the same spirit.

"You can give me—how long?" she asked abruptly.

"As long as you can find it convenient to sit at dinner with me," I replied as directly and briefly.

"Very well, then," she hesitated an instant. "I will be down again in a few minutes. We will drive out to Berdon's on Riverside Drive. You need not arrange for a conveyance. I have a limousine at my disposal."

I had not been accustomed to thinking of her in conventional skirts, and I have to admit that while she was gone my mind kept dwelling on the shapeliness of her covert clad and unclad

knee. I was not familiar with ladies' joints, excepting as I may have noted them in the chorus of the stage or on the beach in summer, but I had unconsciously observed that there is a great difference in feminine knees. I have a fancy that they are quite as distinctive as evidences of temperament as the eyes or the ears.

However, by the time she returned with her wraps I had acquired a pleasant feeling of friendliness for Claire, having constructed her in my mind with the knee as a nucleus, much as scientists build up a medieval or prehistoric creature from its hip-bone. Anyway, I had recovered from the slight animosity I had at first felt at the manner of her request to come to her.

V

THE car whirled us out along Riverside Drive, amid conventional comments on the weather, which had moderated temporarily into a spring day, and we were soon enough seated at the table with the dinner served. She came directly to the point of the interview.

"Now, I want you to tell me all about Harry," was the way she arrived.

"You received the paper I sent you," I parried.

"Yes. And I have read everything that was published in the papers. I take it that you have heard nothing further from Peter since he disappeared."

"Not a word," I replied, thankful that I could answer at least one question honestly.

"The idiot!" she said wrathfully. "I always told Harry that Peter was overrated. But he insisted on keeping him. He used to serve his father," she added by way of final proof.

"What would you have had him do with him?" I asked casually, spearing an oyster.

"Pension him off, of course," was her disposition of Peter.

"Poor Peter," I murmured. "He did his best according to his understanding."

"His best!" She took me up. "Was it his best? Do we any of us do our best? If what the most of mankind do is their best, they are a sorry lot. The man who amounts to anything does the right thing at the right time, whether it is his best or his worst."

I had to admit that this was true, but protested that man was fallible, and that at any rate Peter was not a sailor.

"That is just it," she retorted. "He should have kept to his own part, where he could keep his head, and not mixed up with something where he was sure to lose it."

"The world is filled," she continued, while the waiter was removing the course, "with near-men, men who never quite fill the places they are supposed to—men who never quite arrive."

"What would you have them do?" I protested. "Would you have them forswear their creator and hunt a new one?"

"No. Get into the places in which they naturally belong. I do not expect my cob to clear a six-foot fence, nor my hunter to pull a drag. Peter should have been a hall-boy in an Old Ladies' Home."

I laughed in spite of myself, not so much for the sentiment as for the manner in which she said it. And amid it all it was dawning upon me that Claire really cared more for Creighton than she was disposed to admit, or than he himself knew. In her thoughts, Peter's blundering was the cause of his master's death, and she could not dismiss him from her mind, as I was certain she was accustomed to do other unpleasant things.

"Why did you not marry Creighton?" I asked abruptly, when the fish course had been placed before us, and the waiter had responded to a call elsewhere. "He loved you, and he proposed to you."

She raised her eyes slowly and looked straight into mine without so much as the flicker of a lash. "Did he tell you that?"

"Yes." I met her gaze frankly. "He showed me your picture, and told me

of the trip on the Continent with you and your aunt."

"Was that all?"

I found it convenient to delve into my fish at that moment, and so was not looking at her when I replied casually, "Nothing, save that you refused him," after which she was silent for a period, while she toyed with an unused fork.

"It was decent of Harry to put it that way," she said at last very quietly. "He was always loyal, even to the point of what others must be made to think of his friends."

Her eyes were lowered, but I fancied their lashes were wet. She laid the fork very deliberately and straightly upon the cloth.

"But I did not refuse him," she continued unreservedly. "I told him the last time, that if he would renew the—the offer in a year from then, but—well, he did not renew it, not at the end of the year, or *ever* afterwards," she confessed in lowered voice.

She could not help the admission, one which few if any women would have made under the circumstances. It was in her to do this sort of thing. I knew it, and I should not have let her do it. But it came too quickly.

"I think that he believed that you did not really care for him, in the way he wanted you to do," I tried to twist the facts into a balm.

She was busy with her thoughts for a time, and the fish course was removed and the following one substituted in silence. I cut the mignon and the waiter served it, but she left hers untasted.

"Would you have married him," I asked gently, "if he had gone to you at the end of the year?"

"I might have—I do not know," she replied quietly, searching her heart for its answer. "I could have loved him, not as girls love perhaps, but as women love. But I wanted him to love me as men love girls—not as they love women; tempestuously—romantically. I was foolish, perhaps, but it was so."

I glanced up in surprise.

"You?" I ejaculated, involuntarily.

"And why not I?" she queried gravely. "Am I less a woman, because I ride horse-back and play polo and golf?"

"No," I replied, vaguely. "It was not that, but—"

"But what?" she was smiling, and I caught a flash of that which had caused the traffic police to brave the orders of his chief and send her car across the fire hose.

"It was," I stammered, "what Creighton said of you—that you were never ruffled nor disconcerted, that you always adapted yourself to conditions without a murmur. It is the temperament of a self-poised woman, not of a romantic schoolgirl." Anything was better than to allow her to fancy it worse than it was.

"That was like him also," she said softly, her eyes dimming. "The trouble was," she continued slowly, "that I was to him more an outdoor companion than a girl to be in love with. I commanded his admiration, his approval of everything I did. I never tore his heart to shreds, nor caused him a sleepless night. I have seen his eyes sparkle a hundred times, but I have never seen them concerned, nor jealous, nor even compassionate."

"Did you ever happen to fall from your horse, or turn your ankle on the links?" I asked.

"No, that would have been careless. I never do such things."

"I fancied not," was my response. And then she looked up with quick understanding.

"I see—you mean—"

"I am not quite sure what I do mean," I interrupted hastily. "I am feeling my way."

I pressed the condiments upon her, but she would not eat. She explained that it did not matter, that she had only come to talk to me—to have me talk to her. Her face was good to look at, with its fresh, perfect complexion and its features without a single flaw that even an artist might discover. Her hands were white and firm, and I knew their grasp was strong and buoyant like her walk.

"I could hardly fall from a horse," she said simply, at length. "Instinct, if nothing else, would prevent it, or at least make me land on my feet. And to turn my ankle on the links, it would be pretending—acting the hypocrite. I could not do such things."

"Of course you could not," I agreed. "It is not in you. You would only despise yourself for such subterfuges. Love with you is too real a thing, too perfect a conception to be gained by stooping to such impostures. Your heart, your mind, your very body, is honest, honest to the very core. Animals are honest by instinct. Your hand on the neck of a fractious horse—" I added tentatively, reaching for an olive.

"Harry has told you?" she looked up quickly.

"But it is true?"

"Yes," she admitted simply and without vanity.

"The trouble is—please understand that I am speaking seriously, that I mean just what I am saying—the trouble is that you are too perfect. It sounds like an anomaly, but it is true. Your very perfection is your disaster in love. Men admire women for their perfections, but—perhaps they love them most for their weaknesses. It may be so with women. It may account for the fact that such worthless men are often loved by such splendid women."

We were at the *café noir* now. Claire sipped her coffee, and slowly spread the *fromage* over a cracker.

"You have had—experience," she said thoughtfully.

"No," I answered. "I am feeling my way, as you are, today."

"You are married?"

"I have never married," I replied, stoically.

If she was inclined to look upon my celibacy as a crime I was prepared to bear up under it.

She sipped her coffee again in silent contemplation. Then she looked up at me, her face breaking into the smile that broke the discipline of the traffic force.

"What are we perfect ones to do?" she queried in droll despondency.

I was compelled by the very infection of her countenance to laugh outright.

"Marry the defectives, and raise the average," I retorted. "But I thank you for the compliment," I added. "It was rather decent of you."

"You dear man, you have taught me more in ten minutes about love than I have learned in ten years," she sobered quickly.

"Out of the mouths of infants—" I began. "But if I have taught you anything, it has been most unwittingly," I protested. "I have learned a great deal myself tonight."

She reached forth her two hands, her white, firm hands, and took mine across the table.

"You have helped me," she said gravely, "more than I can ever tell you. I needed just such a talk as we have had more than you could ever imagine. I am thanking you."

Going back with her in the limousine I thought to mention the package of letters, all tied up and sealed, which I had found in Creighton's desk, bearing her name.

"You may send them to me if you will," she said, with the first touch of weariness. And then she added in bitterness of spirit, "It is a wonder that I did not send them to him engraved on copper plate."

She did not speak again until she bade me good-bye at her hotel. "Thank you," she said again then, and that was all. But it meant a great deal—the way she said it.

I went home pondering deeply, an exercise which occupied my thoughts far into the night. In a way I could but feel a tender and keen sympathy for Claire. A girl vibrating with youth and health; a woman of high conceptions and clean resolves, and as masterful control of self; too true to that self and too honest with others to stoop to the little artifices and coquetries of her sex, and yet with a heart as yearning and tender and as loyal as a child's, entitled by right of sheer quality to a man's best love, but drawing only—admira-

tion. It seemed as I had suggested, that she was barred through her very excellences from those things which she most craved.

I dropped asleep at last, dreaming of a single, lone figure, her backward-flowing garments outlining the contour of her strong young limbs, breasting forward with sure foot upon the hillocks of earth's marshes, while the others struggled and tumbled along behind.

VI

My evenings had been so broken since his departure that I had had but few alone with Creighton's library, and it was with reluctance that I agreed, under some pressure, to join Van Burleson at the last performance of the season at the Metropolitan. His family had long owned a box there, and I fancied at the time that his choice of myself to complete his party was by reason of some sudden necessity.

I arrived rather late and was ushered into his box during the first act, and at the moment that Caruso was beginning his wonderful "Celeste Aida." Von Burleson silently motioned me to a seat behind one of the ladies present, and I dropped into it with a vision before me in the half light of the house of a gleaming back and shoulders.

I could not see my lady's face, but the poise of her head seemed to stir some faint, delicious memory within me, and as I leaned forward the subtle perfume of her body and the soft radiance of her skin permeated through every pore of my being and left me ravished and trembling.

I forgot Creighton, and Eleanor and Claire, and all the others and everything else about me, while Caruso's words seemed my own, pouring out to her through my lips the passion and rapture of my very soul. I was so close to her that with the final movement of Rhadames' ecstasy I found myself reaching forth to clasp her in my arms.

It must have been the low lights, the seductive strains of Verdi's romanza, perhaps the sudden sway of her close mysterious presence—in any event it was the first time I had so trembled because of any woman.

I settled back in my seat, faint and exhausted, dazed at myself—frightened at my own emotion. She made no movement. I did not know whether she felt anything of what I had, or was even conscious of my presence behind her. But with the end of the scene she turned her head slightly, and I saw that she was very white.

She addressed Von Burleson.

"I am going to ask Mr. Laughton," she said quietly, "to take me out into the promenade." I arose in astonishment, for my name had not been mentioned.

Von Burleson and the others expressed their evident concern.

"It is close here in the box, I think," she explained, smiling faintly. "I will be all right in a few moments."

My introduction to the others of the party followed quickly, and I passed through the door behind her, and did not look at her until we had reached a divan and were seated.

Then I faced her.

"Gertrude!" I exclaimed in amazement, and then went red and confused beyond power of apology.

She glanced at me, dumfounded at what she must have taken to be indefensible effrontery on my part, and drew back and straightened with a movement of hauteur.

"I can only beg your pardon," I said humbly, when I had gotten my wits together.

"It was not with any intention of being familiar. You must believe me," I went on earnestly. "It was because of recognizing you so suddenly—and because Creighton had always spoken of you by that name, and I really know no other. I recognized you from his photograph of you."

"It was about him that I wanted to talk with you," she said after a moment, in which she measured me swiftly and recovered from her own surprise. "I asked Mr. Von Burleson to make you

one of the party. It was my only opportunity of meeting you."

I think that I must have been trembling slightly, or it may have been because of the directness of my gaze, but she looked away, and I was sure that a faint flush crept from her neck upward to her temples.

And this was the way I came to meet Gertrude—and this was the way I met her, flushing and trembling like a schoolboy, I—who had regarded women purely as interesting subjects for speculative analysis to be eventually pinned to a card and placed in a cabinet along with one's collection of entertaining experiences. I had always looked upon their creation—out of a spare rib of a man, as set forth in the Genesis of the orthodox religion—as quite in keeping with their relationship to him—an incident merely, provided for his annoyance in his hours of leisure, and necessary only for those optimistically inclined toward the evolution of the species.

Of course if one has abnormal ideals and ambitions regarding his own duties toward society as a generic entity, and its perpetuation, he is welcome to them. I never spent any time in proscribing the unicorn because of the horn in the centre of his forehead. It is his forehead—not mine. The thought that evolved itself in my mind as I tossed on the bed in the early hours of the next morning and which worried me into getting up and dressing at an unseemly hour, was whether it might not be that Gertrude was the woman who had been created out of my spare rib. In no other way could I intelligently account for my disconcertment in her presence.

The foyer-call for the next act left us but a few moments for converse, and she was too consistent an observer of the amenities to propose a second incursion to the divan. The party was taken by Von Burleson to a supper after the opera, when I had a better opportunity of observing Gertrude and to contemplate her beauty and charm.

For Gertrude certainly possessed both beauty and charm. She was the most perfectly poised woman of my experience, a woman of rare tact and graciousness of word and manner. She had the form and bearing of a "thoroughbred," as Creighton had described her—not a mere creature of society and its conventions, but its enchanting exponent. There was never a false movement of her exquisitely rounded arms, nor of her beautiful shoulders. I could quite understand that one might never souse them with saltwater. And I knew somehow what he meant by his reference to pressing one's lips to them. I was bound to admit to myself as I lay huddled in the chair before a cold hearth in the early hour of that following morning that, granting the hypothesis of my troubled thoughts, that spare rib had been something of a rib.

VII

GERTRUDE left me that evening with an invitation to call upon her at the Von Burlesons', where she was stopping during her stay in the city, an invitation which I accepted, at the cost of an unnecessary visit to my tailor and some unwonted items at the florist's. There is something very self-satisfying and elating, a sort of an enjoyable fitness about a perfectly groomed environment, and I began to feel that that for which Society stands at its best is its own justification.

I saw and was with Gertrude a number of times during the two months that she stayed in the city, but it was not until I had come to know her rather well that I ventured to ask her the question I had put to Eleanor and Claire. It must be admitted that here also I asked it perhaps as much on my own account as on Creighton's.

We were in Von Burleson's conservatory, where she was serving me tea, one bright afternoon when the sun was warm in the west. I asked it with a tone of indifference, more as an aid to conversation.

"Mr. Creighton," she replied, after a moment's hesitation, "was one of the

most charming men I have ever known. He was of the best type of the well-rounded man of today, educated, refined and intelligent, with a quick wit and an inborn sense of integrity. He was a consistent product of our present social system. His ancestors were Maine shipbuilders and Boston *litterateurs*, and from this melting pot of sturdy honesty and accomplishment, and intellectuality and culture, one might reasonably expect a superior product. Is it not so?" she asked gravely.

"Yes?" I interrogated, for I knew there was something else in her thoughts.

"I take it from your question, that he must have told you something of our relations," she evaded.

"He told me that he loved you, and had asked you to marry him," I replied truthfully.

I hoped that she would not ask any further questions, for I knew that I could not lie to her, even for Creighton's friendship and my promise.

"He asked me years ago—when it was impossible for me to—to accept anyone."

She slowly poured herself another cup.

"Afterwards, if he had come for me—I do not know," she paused as she reached for the sugar tongs. "I have never quite known." And I knew that her lips trembled.

"And why have you never quite known?" I persisted cruelly. It came to me on a sudden that *I* must know—must know what it was that she had never quite known. I had forgotten Creighton and all else save the wild insistence within myself. However much it might pain or hurt her I must know the truth.

"You corresponded for years," I went on recklessly, "and he wrote you the most passionate, ardent letters."

She glanced up in undisguised astonishment.

"He told you all of this?"

"Yes," I declared, unheeding the slow flush which was mounting to her cheeks. "You knew that he loved you passionately."

"Passion is not—love," she answered in a low voice, dropping her eyes.

"But it is evidence of it," I insisted illogically, leaning forward.

"Possibly." She thought for a moment, disregarding my action, whether or not she was aware of it. "But his—his passion for me—whatever passion he had for me—came from the æsthetic side of his nature, from the comfortable, refined side."

"You mean—?"

She looked up at me and for an instant her eyes met mine. Then she looked away, through the palms.

"I mean that it did not come from the very depths of his whole being," she explained, slowly weighing her words. "It did not come through that strain—through those ancestors—down in Maine who—"

"—who built ships for life or death upon the dark sea," I supplemented. "What of your love for him?"

She flushed.

"Does it not occur to you that you are asking me some very—intimate questions?"

"I know I am," I pressed, "but I am asking them."

Why I should have presumed to subject her to this grilling I can understand now only vaguely, if at all. But why she of all women permitted it I have never understood even vaguely.

"Is it not possible," she said, reddening, "that love may beget only its kind?"

And then, in self-protest against such evasion, she said:

"I loved him—loved him terribly at times. I would perhaps have married him, for he meant everything in life to me, everything—save—I was afraid of myself," she ended quickly, her bosom rising and falling with the sudden flush of emotion which she could not keep back.

"Afraid of *yourself?*" I repeated in dazed wonderment.

"Afraid that—that he might not be able always to . . ."

"To hold your love," I suggested gently.

I was beginning to understand.

"But why?" This was the question I was wanting answered, for the answer to which my very soul was straining.

"Must I be unkind to him?" she asked, her eyes filling with tears. "I have told you that I loved him."

"I am his friend, the best friend he has perhaps, next to yourself, and I am asking for him, for his sake."

I hope that the Great Adjuster of all truths and falsehoods does not look too closely to the balances or set down the score before they stop swaying. It was true enough, as things turned out, but I am not at all sure that I really believed just what I said then. I have a secret fancy that my friendship for Creighton at that moment was a negligible quantity.

"I imagine," she went on evenly, quickly recovering her serenity, "that we were both of us the products of the present social system. It makes for refinement, but it also encourages weaknesses, do you not think?"

"And in what way did this apply to Creighton?" I asked.

"I am convinced that had he as a boy been thrown upon his own resources he would have made a high mark for himself. As it was, he never felt the lash of necessity. He became a dilettante, an agreeable idler. He did everything well—but he did not do anything extraordinarily well."

"If someone could have aroused him —could have inspired him with ambition—" I commenced.

"—if *someone* could only have done it," she took me up quickly, "could have aroused those latent powers—for he had them. God knows he had them. He gave them to him," she exclaimed, passionately, with a dry sob in her throat.

She arose from her chair in quick, nervous tension, and stood by the window, looking out upon the pulsing life of the avenue, steadying herself with a hand upon the curtain.

"I," she said in a strained voice after a moment, "I—I—was not the one. I could not do it. And I tried."

I thought of the rejected post at Vienna, and could fancy many other things wherein he must have failed such a woman as Gertrude.

She turned back from the window and faced me. Her eyes were wet, but they sought mine appealingly and held them bravely.

"I have told you all this—only because whatever may be said against him must with equal right be said against me also. If he failed in any respect with his life, or with others, I have failed—in the same way. We could not help each other—we were too much alike. We were melted of the same sort of materials, in the same kind of a crucible."

The rest of the hour does not belong particularly to Creighton. As for myself, I went slowly home, distrait and prone to many unanswered questionings.

VIII

KATHLEEN arrived upon the scene on my erotic researches on Creighton's behalf, in the early part of May. It might be more strictly true to say that I pushed her into it. I may not have mentioned that Creighton possessed what he designated as a "very nifty roadster," and which he turned over to me before he left, and which I promptly consigned to storage for the winter. With the opening of spring that thing covered with a white canvas pall, up there in the far corner of an uptown tenth-floor loft, put off its coma and proceeded to haunt my sleeping hours like some grim monster struggling at its chains.

When I got to thinking about it in the daytime I went down and had a talk with the garage-keeper. He agreed to provide an instructor who would teach me to curb and guide the beast about like a lamb—in seven lessons and a valedictory. He was mixed up in his terms. He should have said seven lessons and a commencement.

However, I managed fairly well under the tutelage, and got so I could safely drive as far south as Seventy-second Street. Fortunately all the working parts were inclosed in a sort of an aluminum casket, and the chauffeur could not get at them on the road, and the French mechanic at the garage knew his business. I had ventured to invite Gertrude for a ride north of Seventy-second Street, and we had a very agreeable afternoon of it. After one glance at my countenance the drivers of other cars kindly gave me more room than I could use.

The operation of an automobile is, it seems, quite the reverse of all hypothetic processes. A true synthesist should not be allowed to drive a motor car through a crowded thoroughfare. In the automobile you take your foot off the pedal and it goes. In most affairs you have to put things together to make them go, not let go of them.

The afternoon was so inviting that, it being Saturday, I decided to go out early and "take a spin along Riverside Drive." If I had done so nothing would have happened. But I felt bold enough to venture as far south as Forty-second Street on Fifth Avenue.

The way was crowded and I had to swing into line beside another line which, with my own, was meeting two other lines on the other side of the avenue. It is a slow and nerve-racking process for an amateur. It is stop and start, and doing it over again every fifty feet.

There was an electric coupé immediately in front of me, and I was trying to keep pace behind it, without bumping into it, or being bumped into behind. I had come perilously near the rear springs of the coupé several times, which caused some amusement for the driver and some consternation with the occupants of the car a few steps forward of me in the other line.

It must have been some notice of this that caused the lady occupant of the coupé in front of me to look back through the window. She would hardly have done so if the line had been moving, but it happened that we were standing still. My "nifty roadster" was growling and chafing under the restraint and shedding its frothings of impatience on the asphalt. It was not in a pleasant mood anyway. Neither was I—but that had nothing to do with it.

It was when the lady in front was looking back through the window that I happened to glance up. For a brief moment I remarked her with polite indifference. She has told me since that I glowered at her, which she has since told me was so malevolent a glower that, in spite of herself, she smiled. It was when she smiled that, like the flash of the spotlight, the dark woodwork of the coupé resolved itself into a frame of beaten silver—and I gasped.

Some people simply gasp with their mouths. But it seems that when I gasp I gasp all over. It may be all right, for instance, to gasp above my belt line. But the trouble was that I gasp with my feet. My foot slid off and the clutch slid in.

IX

Just what happened in the next ten seconds was a phantasmagoria of kaleidoscopic events in astounding action.

I still have visions of a roaring, raging beast snorting fire and smoke, making a wild, frantic leap straight at the face in the frame, and then bucking that frame straight on through the line ahead amid screams and imprecations—while I hung desperately to a round thing that looked like a life-preserver, in futile efforts to hold it back.

Creighton had omitted to tell me that his "nifty little roadster" was only a 90-horsepower motor car. From the way it was scattering protesting vehicles to right and left it would doubtless have gotten away safely with the coupé in its jaws if some bystander had not leaped upon the running board and thrown the switch.

I managed, however, to spring with some celerity to the lady's assistance, and to drag her out of her electric. Just

why I insisted upon doing so against her protest, I hardly know, unless it was that I had lost all confidence in Creighton's "nifty little roadster."

The lady was standing by Creighton's car, regarding it curiously, when the traffic policeman made his way through the gathering crowd and took charge of the situation.

He demanded my name, and I courteously handed him my card. "Stanley J. Laughton," he read aloud, and as he was writing down the address in his little book I caught the lowered tones of the lady's voice.

"I thought there was something familiar about this car," she was saying.

The officer gathered a few more names into his book, inscribed therein the numbers on the two machines, and turned to the lady and touched his hat.

"I will take him with me to the station and have him entered," he indicated me with a nod of his head, "and you can prefer your charges later. I have him spotted all right."

She regarded me gravely for a brief instant.

"I do not think it will be necessary," she turned pleasantly to the officer, with just the suggestion of a dimple near the corner of her mouth, "to make out a warrant. I think the gentleman will come with me without any trouble, if you will help him to get my electric disengaged from the front of his car."

This was not at all in accord with his experience with such matters, and the officer eyed us both a bit suspiciously. But at the lady's insistence he forced the crowd back, and with the aid of a bystander or two I managed to get the ends of the bumper untangled from the spokes of the electric and we pushed the latter around the corner onto the side street.

When I got back to the car the lady had the hood up and was inspecting the engine.

"What caused the motor to stop?" she asked, peering into its depths.

I felt my face burning and could imagine the vivid color it must have presented to the lady, had she been unkind enough to look up at that instant.

"Someone jumped on the running board and threw the switch," I stammered, in a low voice so that the bystanders might not hear.

"Ah!" She straightened up and put down the hood and locked it.

"The car does not appear to have been damaged at all. Do you think," she turned to me, "that you could start the engine?"

"I might try," I retorted caustically.

I was sufficiently humiliated at my part of the whole affair, and I was growing a bit angry at her as well. Her cool, quiet assumption of authority was not particularly flattering to my self-esteem.

"Suppose you let me try," she replied pleasantly, and climbed into the seat behind the steering wheel.

The engine started with a roar, and with an assuring nod the lady motioned me to the seat at her side.

Slowly, and with such remnants of my dignity as I still possessed, and stifling my growing resentment as best I could, I got into the car. She did the proper thing to the levers and we moved off down the avenue, leaving a much-astonished officer and a grinning crowd behind us.

X

"THIS was Harrison Creighton's car, and you were his friend and confidant," she said, succinctly, as we neared Twenty-fifth Street.

I was so occupied in watching the masterful manner in which she was handling the car and keeping her course through the crowded traffic, that I was hardly conscious that she was speaking at all. It was several moments before her words carried their meaning to my dazed brain. It impressed me then that they were more explanatory than inquiring.

"Yes," I admitted. "And you are Kathleen."

I said it with a malicious sort of pleasure. She was busy swinging the

car around Madison Square, but as we headed north she gave me a swift side glance.

"I am not sure that I know you by any other name," I explained in extenuation of my apparent familiarity. "Your photograph is on the library table and I have been getting used to it for the past six months."

At Thirtieth Street she turned across into Park Avenue and drew up in front of a hotel.

"Would you mind going in and telephoning to my garage and directing them to go and get my electric?"

She looked at me pleasantly, and I got the full effect of the tawny, golden-brown eyes of Creighton's description.

"After that I will drive you wherever you may wish to go. I know this car," she explained, "and while I am on the street I somehow feel safer in it than —out of it."

I did not know whether to be angry or laugh. Her words and tone were frank enough, and I could not make sure in my mind that she was thinking to make the least fun of me. I adopted the middle course and went in and telephoned her instructions. After all it was a very agreeable experience, being driven about the city by that pair of eyes.

"I was not bound for any place in particular," I explained when I came out. "I was merely out for a drive. It was my first experience with it south of Fiftieth Street. I am just learning," I capitulated.

She opened the throttle and we sped along northward and then over into Riverside Drive. Far up along the Hudson she pulled the car to a stop on a high spot overlooking the river.

"You handle the machine like an expert," was my involuntary exclamation.

"The car and I are old friends," she replied softly, her eyes upon the far-away New Jersey hills.

"Your car can hardly be repaired under a month," I said after a few moments' thought. "It will have to be repainted. In the meantime you must consider this car at your disposal. I could use it only occasionally anyway," I urged, "for I am closely occupied at the office during the week days."

I fancied that there was a quick, startled movement of her body, but she did not answer me for some moments. She just sat there, with her eyes upon the distant hills. And then she folded her arms about the steering wheel and laid her head upon them, and I knew by her shoulders that she was sobbing softly.

XI

It was thus that I came to know Kathleen. At my insistence she used the car at her pleasure, and that for two reasons it was a pleasure I knew for a certainty. Aside from her joy in a high-powered machine such as this one, I knew the car possessed for her much of Creighton's personality.

Frequently she drove down and brought me back from the office. Occasionally we took dinner together uptown, or drove out to some distant hostelry. She adopted me as a sure and safe friend, and in a matter-of-course way that precluded any straining of an otherwise very agreeable relationship between a man and a woman.

Of Creighton we spoke but seldom, and then her words were brief and very gentle. That her grief for his loss was deep and consuming I was certain, but whether it was for him as an old and dear friend, for the playmate of her youth, or in another way, I could never quite make sure. I knew somehow that that first afternoon was not the only time that she had rested her head on her arms on that steering wheel, far out somewhere along the Hudson.

It was far up along the Hudson that I expressed casually my wonder that she had not married Creighton. We were finishing a supper one moonlight evening on a veranda overlooking the river.

"There was a time before I married," she answered quickly, "when I wanted him to want me."

In thinking since of her words and

the tone in which she spoke, I have come to believe that she felt almost a secret resentment against Creighton for not taking her to himself then, as she may have long have had the right to assume that he would do—that he might have saved her from her marriage with Gregg. And since, I could not be sure, her heart perhaps had never forgiven him.

At another time I spoke jocosely of her marrying again.

She took me up with "Why should I?"

And I responded with, "Why not?"

"For one thing," she replied, "I am independent, and I do not have to marry for a home or for support. I am free to go and come as I please. I have made my happiness along lines which I am able to pursue. Why should I give it up for an uncertainty?"

And then she added after a moment, but without apparent bitterness, "I have no longer any illusions—about—marriage—nor about life."

We were speaking once of a man whose recent accomplishments in some line of endeavor was the subject of considerable newspaper encomium.

Suddenly she leaned forward. "Bud," she said earnestly. "Bud" was her nickname for Creighton. "Bud could have done such a thing as that. He could have done it better—if only he had been willing to get down to work."

"Was he lazy?" I asked, indifferently.

"No, not that," she protested quickly. "He was not lazy. He could get down to things if he wanted to. The trouble was that he never seemed to want to. Things came his way, without much effort, and he was willing to let them. When they went differently he was mildly surprised, and let them go at that."

I kept silence, thinking that she might say more, if left to her own undirected thoughts. Whenever I tried with any effort at all obvious to bring the conversation around to Creighton she seemed to avoid the subject. My silence was productive, for after a few moments she said thoughtfully:

"If Bud could only have gotten down to work, he would have been different, if he had only gotten both feet squarely on the ground, he would have known just what he wanted, and when he wanted it, and just how to get it."

She rose to her feet with a quick impatience, unusual for her, though the liqueur had not been tasted, and reached for her motor coat from across the chair. And that night she turned the car back up along the Drive, and it was into the small hours of the morning and we were far up beyond all traffic before she throttled down and turned back to the city.

Kathleen and her mother had arranged for a cottage down on the Maine Coast for the months of July and August, and I persuaded her to take the car with them, promising at their kindly solicitations to spend a couple of weeks with them at the close of their season. We all came back together, two cars of us, motoring down along the coast at our leisure, with frequent incursions inland where the roads or the destinations appeared inviting. I had spent two weeks and more with Kathleen on her native heath, as it were, an experience which any man, whoe'er he be, might rightly have envied me—and most of all Creighton himself.

XII

It was the afternoon of the tenth of September that we arrived in the city, and sending my baggage up to the apartment I dropped in at the club—to unshoulder if possible the weight of lonesomeness that had suddenly oppressed me after the farewell with Kathleen and her mother. Though everyone I met there seemed hopelessly uninteresting, and the bridge tables offered but little diversion, it was late when I reached home. I had forgotten to notify the care-woman and the apartment was cold and cheerless, so I got to bed as quickly as the exigencies of a bath would permit.

A raw, chilling fog was drifting in at the windows when I awoke, and I resur-

rected some heavier underwear and a last winter's suit, rang for the care-woman, to whom I hurriedly gave instructions, and fled into the elevator amid a bombardment of questions about the latest news of Creighton. Poor soul! She meant well. But so doubtless did the Hottentots toward the early missionaries.

The day proved an annoying one, as such first days after a vacation are apt to, and I left the office early, hurried through dinner and went home directly afterwards with the alluring prospect of a quiet evening in the old-time easy-chair before the familiar and hospitable fireplace.

I lighted a cigar and strolled about the room with a sense of content and well-being. I passed pleasant greetings with Eleanor on the writing desk, touched my hat in fancy to Claire by the tall clock, and returned Kathleen's familiar smile that again warmed me from the table. I lingered a few additional moments with Gertrude on the mantel, and then dropped comfortably into the leather-cushioned chair by the table, facing the hearth, which had come to be mine from the first night when Creighton had called me over the telephone.

Getting back again amid the familiar surroundings brought him vividly before me, standing as he had so much of the time before the fire, in his easy, debonair attitude—a modern, refined Petronius, an arbiter of the fashions in the dress and the thought of his class, of his social environment, of everything perhaps save its—women, and according to them—himself.

I smiled comfortably, from the vantage-ground of experience, an experience much augmented—I had to admit somewhat reluctantly—during the past six or seven months.

The great problem, for the solution of which Creighton had precipitated a tentative demise and perpetrated an unwarranted deceit upon those who really cared for him, was not such an inexplicable one after all, when one came to think it over.

Might it not be, I reflected as I reviewed it all in my mind, that Creighton was but the victim of the process of evolution—a product refined in some respects beyond the point reached by the average of his class. Such a thing could be possible enough. The process can hardly be expected to advance for all with equal pace. And if there may be advancement in the process as regards man as a whole, may there not be a like progression in each of those parts—the emotions or perceptions, which are the components of the whole?

The caveman possessed but one desire—life—and to him that meant food, and food only, at least in his earliest state. Let us predicate his desires, then, as coming to consist of hunting his food, and later of cooking it. As his habit of cooked food grew and the game became more scarce, he had to hunt farther, and coming home tired he needed a cook. And that, on the æsthetic side of his nature—if we may call it such—was all woman meant to him, just a cook, a convenience.

Later the desire for her as a companion grew within him, and farther on in the process of his evolution his perceptions and their attendant desires demanded that she should have their complementary attributes. His one primitive desire branched off in time into several, as branches lead from the stock itself and become independent tentacles of form and beauty. Those favored by the sun or some other influence develop farther and more perfectly than some of the others perhaps. As the stock and roots take sustenance to an extent through the branches, the latter become necessary to and shape as well, the very life of the tree itself.

I could understand that in some such way it was with Creighton. His several perceptions or emotions, or whatever they may be called, had been refined to such a degree that they had seemed to become more or less essential to his very life, if we are to deem life as something other than a mere physical existence. He was a hothouse product, no doubt, but he was not, as

he so vehemently disclaimed, a polygamist. He craved only one woman, but his evoluted impulses required that she possess a number of highly developed attributes. It would appear that he had not found them all in one person. I doubt if any woman could possess them all. It would be asking a bit too much of either sex, for the processes of civilization, of breeding, had created desires—subtle, though no less imperious, wants.

Kathleen appealed to his primitive nature, his instinct for the woods and the chase, kept alive somehow on down through his remoter ancestors. And Claire represented a more lately developed ancestral love for athletics, for horses and equipages—a refined sporting proclivity, as did Gertrude what we know as society and its conventionalities. And Eleanor stood for their antitheses, for his love of art and everything æsthetic, which must be ever close to nature and be untrammelled—however refined—in its expression. I had not met Denise, but I fancied that she could be accounted for through some Corsair ancestor who roved the open seas with a free tiller, the hold filled with gold and good old Jamaica rum. I have once myself in a strange while had a suspicion that an ancestor of mine was at least a boatswain on some such craft.

I could not figure out where this evolution or super-refining process is going to carry the race. Creighton was a man developed along all branches, but yet he was in a bad way as regards such little items as comfort and content. If his nature could only have been satisfied with a cook—just a plain cook—his problem would have been easier—even in these days of geometrical progression in cooks.

And as for the women, four of them at least appeared to know Creighton better than he knew himself. And yet, I reflected, they none of them had much on him, after all. They were victims in a way of their own emancipation. It would seem that formerly they required man principally as a provider of food and shelter, and not too much raiment, perhaps, and were disposed to overlook some masculine shortages. But as they became independent of him for such things, they grew more critical. And where also was it all going to carry the women? Where must lead and end this super-refining process? What of the race? What of—?

The more I revolved these matters in my mind the more turbid it became. The thing got on my nerves, and in desperation I struggled to my feet and took what Creighton had called a "stiffener."

As I turned back to the hearth my eye encountered Denise, in the old gold frame of foreign design. A pleasing fancy seized me and I walked over to her and raised my glass. We would drink to a mutual sentiment—our pirate ancestors.

It was at the moment that I was forming the words of the toast that a knock sounded through the stillness of the room. It was so faint at first that I was uncertain whether I had heard aright.

I turned slowly, the glass poised in my fingers.

There was a minute's deathly silence, and then it sounded again—slightly louder than before.

I crossed to the table and set down the glass. The knock had apparently been upon the panel of the door between the room I was in and the private hall. I did not remember having left the outer door unlatched.

I stepped softly across the rugs and quietly turned the knob.

As the door swung open a lone figure leaning against the casing straightened quickly, and I was conscious of two frightened eyes staring at me through the veil that otherwise obscured the woman's features.

XIII

"I THOUGHT—I beg your pardon—I thought that this was Mr. Creighton's apartment."

"It was," I answered briefly, and

added encouragingly, "I have expected you for some time. In fact I was just about to drink a toast with you when you knocked." And I stepped aside to afford her entrance.

She drew back in vague alarm, steadying herself with her gloved hand upon the doorjamb.

"But I wanted to see Mr. Creighton."

The note of desperation in her voice should have warned me even if its utter weariness had not.

"Have you not heard?" I asked, uncertainly, in surprise.

"Heard? What—what do you mean?" she stammered, in sudden fright, moving slowly towards me into the room.

She seemed herself so frail, and her limbs so weary, that I hastened to get a chair for her.

"Sit here," I said, placing it near the table.

She dropped into it with a movement of so great exhaustion that I became suddenly alarmed.

"Let me get you some wine," I said quickly and I hastened down the hall to the butler's pantry for a fresh glass.

When I returned a moment later she had slipped from the chair to the floor without a sound and her motionless form lay at full length upon the rug beside the table.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: *The concluding installment of this story will appear in the next number.*]

ADDENDA TO WILSTACH

By W. L. D. Bell

AS appetizing as a boiled cocktail.
As flabbergasting as the amorous glance of a lady embalmer.
As naughty as a sister-in-law's kiss behind the door.
As depraved as the boy who made dominoes of his grandfather's femur.
As lardish as the smile of a fashionable rector.
As suffocatingly obese as Violetta dying of tuberculosis pulmonalis.
As musical as the air whistling through a maiden's teeth at the end of a long, adhesive kiss.
As heinous as the crime of J. Flavius Apprippus, who pulled his wife's incisors to make a necklace for the parlor-maid.
As fatuous as the Swedish slavey who tried to make charcoal white by scrubbing it with tooth-paste.
As well-fitting as a saddle on a cow.

NO man is ever true to any woman in both thought and deed unless his love for her is utterly hopeless.

PARASITES

By Paul Hervey Fox

I

IN THE dark bookshelves were marshaled brightly-backed novels and editions in ornate calf; and on the walls old prints and a small painting or two in tasteful frames reflected the discrimination of an amateur of intelligence. The heavy, ochre-hued davenport, the thick Persian rugs, the carven teakwood desk, and the ornaments and utilities in gold and in leather gave to the room an air that was somehow theatrical and unreal.

A clock that rested upon the mantel between a Turkish *narghile* and an ox-blood vase reported that the day had advanced well on towards three in the afternoon when the 'phone rang to announce that Mrs. Frederick Brale was calling.

From the depths of a capacious chair Gerald Chepstowe, flinging his book irritably down, had risen to answer it.

In the moment that followed, he made his way swiftly to the long mirror that hung over a dressing-table in a further room, and anxiously scrutinized his appearance. He ran a comb softly through his hair, arranged his bow tie with quick, deft fingers. Then, lifting one eyebrow and simultaneously drawing in one corner of his mouth, he examined the effect of his expression with critical interest.

He was a tall fellow, of something like twenty-seven years of age, with sloping shoulders and hair parted perfectly in the middle. The long, sallow face he regarded could hardly have been called good-looking, or even pleasant. The mouth had about it a humor that was rather too hard, and the eyes held a light of cool incredulity for all things of the human scene.

He returned to his chair, picking up his book, and assuming an aspect of negligent indifference. As the buzzer in the hallway sounded, a man-servant emerged from the rear of the apartment and opened the door. He retired silently, and left the caller standing there alone, staring timorously down at Gerald.

Mrs. Brale was a woman in the early forties, a woman whose rounded, pink face bespoke a successful course of self-indulgence, and whose petulant brows and vague, surface eyes revealed a character at once fretful and sentimental.

Gerald Chepstowe rose to his feet with an affectation of indolence and with no pretense of welcome in his manner. As she bent her lips towards him with an uncertain smile, he put out his hand somewhat distantly.

She drew back with a ludicrous look of dismay.

"Why, Gerald! Aren't you glad to see me?" she asked in the wounded tone of a small child.

"Yes. Of course. You know I am."

He flung out the fragments as if they were torn from him like guilty scraps of confession.

"Then why don't you kiss me?"

"Oh, well!" He took a sudden step towards her and faintly touched her cheek.

With a sigh of relief Mrs. Brale found a chair and stiffly settled herself. Then she drew out a cigarette-case with fumbling hands. Gerald lay back, watching everything with half-closed eyes.

"By the way, dear," he murmured,

"my cigarettes are getting low. If you've any extra home, don't you know, you might. . . . Oh, don't take any bother of course! But if you should happen to think of it, I'd like. . . . " His voice trailed off into an inaudible mumble. After a pause he added more briskly: "How's your husband?"

"Frederick? The same as ever, he doesn't pay any attention to me, not a bit. And he's so mixed up with some deal or other in the Stock Exchange that he's hardly fit to live with. I told him what you and I were going to do today, and what do you think? He laughed and sent you his regards, and said something insulting about all my friends."

"I sometimes wonder how you stand it," said Gerald Chepstowe softly. "But you still have me. I've taught you how to appreciate things. You've improved wonderfully, Myrtle."

"Do you think so?" she asked eagerly. "Oh, Gerald, I don't know what I would do if I were to lose you! And, Gerald, I've brought you something. Do you want to see it?"

Her eyes danced with a silly pleasure as she groped in her handbag and brought out a little box. Gerald opened it, and found a handsome, jewelled stickpin.

"How nice of you, Myrtle!" he exclaimed with a note of genuine enthusiasm in his voice. "You are good to me! Here!" He bent down and brushed her lips with his. Then he rose, went to his desk, and returned with a handful of rustling papers.

"Myrtle, I've received some—some bad bills lately. I—well, I rather hate to trouble you about the beastly things, but I—

Her eyes wore a look of alarm and that expression of niggardliness which is seldom absent from the faces of those who are themselves avaricious.

"Gerald!" she ejaculated reproachfully. "Why only last month you . . . what did you do with . . . tell me, what do they amount to?"

"Quite a little, I'm afraid, dear," he said in the manner of one who airs a grievance. "I've all sorts of things to keep up, you know. And I can't live cheaply; I'm not sordid. I can't rust along on a suit a season like a clerk. And see here, there have been a lot of expenses of late that I've not told you about. I didn't want to worry you. I kept them to myself. The rent for the apartment is pressing. I couldn't pay it last time out of that—that check. There were other things that were more . . . urgent."

She took the sheaf of papers from his hands, glancing through each rapidly and with a rising indignation. There were bills from well-known restaurants, a stiff reckoning from a club, accounts from wine-merchants, silversmiths, tailors. At the end Mrs. Brale dropped them to the floor with a gasp. Gerald stood looking at her with a faintly quizzical expression, his hands clasped behind his back.

"I won't pay these," she said in shrill protest. "I can't. Eight hundred dollars, and for that little while! It's outrageous. Gerald, I don't see how you have had any call to purchase all these things. This is too much. You will have to settle them yourself."

The gaze he turned upon her was cold, and under it she seemed just perceptibly to waver. But without a word he wheeled and seated himself in an attitude of dejection before the baby grand piano in front of the windows.

His fingers rippled lightly across the keys, struck random chords, associated harmonies. He began to improvise a series of doleful, disjointed phrasings. She sat where she was, staring stolidly at the wall, a look of pique and obstinacy stamped upon her red, childish face.

Playing with exquisite softness, he turned his head to say in a voice half-broken, half-bitter:

"It's not the money, Myrtle. . . . I don't mind that, God knows! But it's the lack of interest in me that your refusal shows. That hurts. . . . But I ought to have known, I ought not to

have trusted a woman. . . . I've made a mistake."

He played on, letting this sink in. A little later he resumed:

"I've devoted myself to you entirely. I'm talented, I'm clever, you know that. I could have been making lots this last year if I'd wanted to. But I've neglected everything for you, I've given you all my time, all my attention, all. . . . Oh, what a fool I've been!"

He shot her a look out of shrewd eyes, saw that her breast was moving. He struck the keys into a burst of sound, and the little instrument echoed the tumult and surge of a soul's desperation.

As it sank lower and lower, Gerald began to speak again. But his voice was only a whisper now.

"And of course I shan't be able to pay. I'll go to prison perhaps, and be fed on bad food, and sleep on an iron bed, and wear a horrible chain around my ankle. . . . Or—I'll shoot myself."

He stopped violently short, and threw his head forward into his arms across the keyboard. The discordant crash was followed by a deathly silence in which the figure that sat hunched rigidly forward upon the piano-stool seemed like the authentic symbol of human despair.

After a little, Gerald, listening intently, heard soft steps from the direction of the desk behind him. A chair moved, a pen squeaked faintly for a few seconds, and then a plump, soft arm circled his fallen head. He jumped to his feet nervously, and brushed the hair out of his eyes. He was breathing heavily.

"You still here? I didn't think you'd wait. I thought I heard you go."

"Gerald, I'm so sorry. And I can't bear to see you miserable. Will—will this help?"

With a simulated start he took the check from her fingers, glancing hastily at it to ascertain if the amount were correct.

"Myrtle, you *are* kind. I am fond of you I—I think." He kissed her in his fleeting, intangible fashion, his face manifesting the satisfaction of the workman whose work has been done. She, too, was beaming, carried away on the tide of her own impulses.

"Oh, Gerald, I do love you so! Don't you love me?"

"Why, I—yes I do—a little," he said in an undertone, gazing down at his feet.

"Oh, Gerald, don't you care for me more than a little, don't you really feel—"

"It's getting late," he interrupted. "Look at the clock. Why, we promised to be at Edgar Race's studio half an hour ago! Your car is outside, isn't it?"

II

"HERE they come!" said Edgar Race to the other two occupants of the darkened room. "There's Chepstowe lolling in the back, the lazy dog!"

It was difficult to discern clearly the faces in that dim light. In the rear of the apartment a skylight made bright a bare working-room, but here thick, velvet curtains obscured and mellowed things and faces. Race, himself, was a short, dark man of forty-five, bearded, and with a perpetual, scowling smile. He was attired in a vivid smoking-jacket, duck trousers, and blue bed-slippers.

On a divan in one corner Nella Ferrars, picturesque in a huge, black hat, smoked a cigarette and stared in ruminative boredom at the toe of one foot. Her expression was quite utterly impassive, and her eyes carried the gleam of sophistication—a sophistication colored by contemptuous amusement.

Pendleton Powers, elaborately dressed, and as impossible as a fashion-plate, sat near her. He had a trick of stealing curious glances up from under his eyebrows when he thought people were not looking. When he spoke, it was to utter cryptic and presumably clever aphorisms in a peculiarly silky drawl.

In the passageway Race flung open

the door and bowed to Gerald's brief murmur:

"I want you to meet Mrs. Brale—Mr. Race."

Race ushered his guests into the room and completed the introductions. Then, with some unintelligible apology, he drew Gerald Chepstowe out into the corridor again, quietly closing the door.

"See here, Chepstowe," he muttered, "I've thought it over. It's coming too strong. You've got to back down." He treated Gerald to an especial exhibition of his unpleasant smile.

"What are you talking about?" asked Gerald frigidly.

"Twenty-five per cent. That's what I'm talking about. I'll give you fifteen."

Gerald raised his eyebrows. "My dear fellow, don't be a fool. I'm doing you a favor because I don't ask fifty. And you can go way-up on the price. The old man's made of gold."

"I don't care," said the other doggedly; "I do the work, don't I?"

Gerald looked bored.

"I'm not going to argue with you," he said in a tired voice. "Take it or leave it. There are lots of others. And a word from me will fix it—either way I want."

Race considered for a minute, defeat growing in his face.

"All right then, damn it," he assented gloomily, and turned to go back into the room.

Gerald stayed him with his hand on the knob.

"Who's this Nella woman?" he queried softly. "I suppose that slimer, Powers, brought her with him?"

Race stuck out his fist in an odd gesture. "Nella Ferrars? The cleverest woman in town. She's smart. I hand it to her. She has one fellow paying for her car, another for her jewels, and another for her apartment. Or so Powers says. And now she's looking for a regular lover, preferably needy."

"Not Powers?"

"Good God! I hope she has better taste!"

He opened the door and Gerald followed him inside.

He went over and sat by Mrs. Brale, but turned his attention on Nella Ferrars in the corner.

Race poured part of the contents of a tall bottle into a cocktail shaker.

"Don't be scared," he shouted above the clatter of the rattled ice. "Just had these prepared over at the St. Thomas. Watched the bartender make 'em myself. H. P. W's. Do you like them? . . . Say, Chepstowe, hand around those sandwiches under the cloth there, will you. Anchovy and pimento. Also hotel-made. Don't blame me!"

Gerald drank down his cocktail, and saw to it that Mrs. Brale's glass was replenished.

"Oh, by the way, Race," he called out, "are you painting much now?"

"Too much. These confounded society-women who want to sit for a portrait take my time from the real things."

Nella Ferrar' eye fell upon Race with an expression of disgusted amusement. Powers leaned over to her and whispered something in her ear, at which she smiled faintly but said nothing.

"Well," Gerald went on, "I don't blame them for bothering you, Race. You *are* a genius! By Jove! Any woman lucky enough to be painted by you will live as long as the pigments stick to the canvas."

He turned to murmur to Mrs. Brale: "You might persuade him yourself, dear. Though I'm not sure. Still if you let him see that you admired him. . . . They all like that, you know!"

Mrs. Brale consumed her third cocktail and held out her glass for a fourth. Her face was complacent, her smile expansive. At that instant Nella Ferrars shifted her position, and stared deliberately at Gerald.

For a moment he waited, hesitant.

Then he rose to the challenge and leisurely made his way to her side.

Nella turned her back to Powers.

With a curiously unmoved face the

latter got up and joined Mrs. Brale.

Edgar Race began shaking up more cocktails.

Mrs. Brale's eyes dilated; her lips trembled. She put down her glass uncertainly, pretending to listen to the bad epigrams that Pendleton Powers was dropping with a nonchalant neatness into her ear. But her face swung around again and again to the corner where Gerald and Nella were conversing in low voices.

The sound of their laughter seemed to scar her heart. She felt that the earth was shuddering in its last revolvings, and that existence was anguish distilled. She could hear nothing.

"Yes . . . yes," she said vaguely to Powers, her eyes fixed upon Gerald in the dark corner.

How well he could talk when he wanted to! And how that woman was leading him on! Mrs. Brale gave a quiver and sat up tensely as she saw Gerald's slim fingers slide forward across the arm of his chair and cover the white hand of Nella Ferrars.

No longer could she control herself. She staggered up trembling.

"Gerald!"

Her utterance was neither a scream nor a groan, but it had in it something of each.

Race whirled about with a frown. Pendleton Powers grinned with honest joy. Gerald, with an angry snap of his fingers, got slowly to his feet.

"Well, what is it?" he asked sharply.

"My car—I must go home—you—"

She could not finish; the words choked in her heaving throat. She stood there in impotent rage and jealousy, a figure grotesque, pitiful, sardonic.

III

"Now that was a fine, pretty thing to do, wasn't it?" rasped Gerald in a biting temper, as the car sped through a side street and turned into Fifth Avenue. "To make a scene like that before all those people! And I was trying to work Race for you. I don't suppose you'll ever get him to paint you now. By Gad! Your jealousy is about driving me wild. I can't look at another woman without your—"

"How dare you!" she hurled back at him in a voice which was lowered as a protection from the chauffeur's hearing and was therefore robbed of much of its original force. "You coward! And with that woman! Couldn't you see what she was? Anyone would know. And with me in the room. You didn't care, you didn't—"

"Hold your tongue!" he interrupted in a heat of anger. "I'm not going to listen to you. But if you don't want to get rid of me, cut out your ridiculous accusations."

"I'd be glad to be rid of you!" she cried.

"Stop the car," he ordered with a note in his voice that drew her up sharply.

He bent over to the chauffeur and spoke to him in a tone of casual request. Mrs. Brale gazed with terrified eyes as the motor paused and Gerald descended without a word, his back towards her. He seemed to vanish like a flame in the crowd that jostled along the sidewalk.

The sky was a dull grey; a few negligible drops of rain fell; Mrs. Brale's face was a picture of wretchedness. She could think of nothing, her mind turned upon emptiness and was dumb; and she could feel only an aching sensation as of something infinitely precious, fiercely desired, lost and sundered from her for all time.

She prepared for dinner in the abstracted manner of one who comes from the funeral of a near relative.

Out of habit, she chewed a piece of lemon-peel to destroy the fumes and the bitter after-taste of the cocktails she had drunk.

Her husband entered and gave her his conventional, brusque greeting. She detected in him the presence of a buoyant humor. Things must have gone well with him to-day.

"How is business, Frederick?" she inquired in a toneless voice. "What are doing just now?"

"Everything!" he rasped out.

He seemed carried away by private considerations, and he plunged into enthusiastic speech without appearing to see her. "We start a Copper Syndicate next week that's going to knock the lights out of W. B. Incidentally we drag the little fishes into the net. We're flooding the market with rumors. Whispers of easy money. We'll let 'em think that each one is going to make his fortune, and that hardly anyone else is wise to the chance. When we knock out the bottom and buy in, there'll be scarcely a small speculator that we shan't have drained dry. After that the big—"

His eyes fell suddenly upon her, and he stopped short as if aware for the first time of to whom he was speaking.

"Keep this silent!" he commanded. "But you wouldn't understand anyway. By the way, I'm going to be busy in my study tonight. You'd better amuse yourself. Why not go off to a show or something with one of your fool poets?"

Mrs. Brale had a pang at the thought that this very evening she had planned to see *Mr. Cinderella* with Gerald.

A stir of hope caught her up, cheering her with amazing promptness.

"Frederick," she said, "since business is going so nicely, can you give me some money? I'll need it very shortly for—for lots of things."

"Money? Why, what on earth do you do with it all? Throw it into the gutters?"

A retort had risen to her lips, when a stray memory halted her.

"Perhaps," she began, "I do spend a lot of money. But when I give all my attention, all my life to you. If I could do other things, maybe I could make some myself."

He laughed, but the laugh died out; and it seemed to her it was less harsh.

"And," she pursued, slowly piecing the rest together, "you don't need to give it to me. I'll get along without it, though it will be hard. For it isn't just the money. It's the fact that your—your refusal shows you have so little interest in me that makes me unhappy."

"Here!" said Frederick Brale gruffly.

He received her kiss upon his forehead with something like scornful satisfaction.

Ten minutes later, Mrs. Brale, seated before her private 'phone, was frantically calling Gerald Chepstowe.

She experienced relief as his quiet voice sounded over the wire.

"Gerald," she said, in a fluttering voice, "do you know who this is?"

"I do."

"Well, Gerald, I forgive you for this afternoon. You were tired, and I—I was cross. Now shall we go and see *Mr. Cinderella?* You still have those tickets, haven't you?"

"I am going, Mrs. Brale, but I have made other arrangements."

"You have made—you are going with someone else—you mean you . . . Gerald!"

"Our friendship was severed this afternoon, I believe, by you. I shall therefore have to say good-by."

"Oh, please, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean, I really didn't—"

The click of the receiver at the other end cut her brutally short.

She turned with a white face, staring at the photograph of Gerald on the table by her side.

"You mean, horrid . . . oh, Gerald, why won't you forgive me!"

She began to sob painfully.

"I'm so miserable!" she told herself in a low wail. "Oh, I guess I'm the unhappiest woman on earth."

Her grief was at once terrible and ridiculous.

Suddenly she lifted her head. He was going with someone else, perhaps even with this awful Ferrars creature. She must find out. She must see for herself. And—she could go with someone herself, and take good care that *he* saw *her*. He must care, and that would make him jealous, wouldn't it? Surely it would be wise if she—

Impatiently she sought her bag, picked out the card for which she was hunting. *Mr. Pendleton Powers* was

engraved upon it, and the telephone number, if she remembered, he had written upon the back. Yes! It was there.

She lifted the receiver to her ear with her left hand. With a pocket handkerchief in her right, she feverishly dried her red and solemn eyes.

IV

It was in the neighborhood of eleven o'clock the next day that Mrs. Brale was called to the 'phone. Her heart leapt as she heard the welcome voice.

"Mrs. Brale, I have something very important to say to you. In fact several things. If you will call at my rooms, no doubt I can make myself clear."

"Oh, yes, Gerald, I'll be right down."

"There is no necessity for that. It will be better for you to come after lunch, not before two in any case. I have to see about my packing."

"Your packing? Gerald, you're not —"

"At two o'clock you will have an opportunity to hear everything. Good-by."

Mrs. Brale spent that dreary interval in some torture of spirit. Three times she had her face massaged by her maid; and her temper was not gentle. Last night she had seen Gerald at the theatre. He had not been with the hateful Nella Ferrars. Indeed he had been alone. But he had seen her and Pendleton Powers together, and he had glared at Powers in a straight, hard way. What did he mean now? Had she done the wrong thing? Was this the final, unforgivable sin?

On the instant of two Mrs. Brale was at his door. She carried in her hands a white package. She was trembling with anxiety and dread. She sniffed nervously as she pressed the buzzer.

Gerald got up awkwardly as she entered. He was looking pale, and he was dressed more soberly than usual. Perhaps he had suffered too. . . . On his desk stood many small, neatly-wrapped boxes.

Mrs. Brale's remaining self-possession abandoned her as she stood there looking helplessly at him.

"Gerald!" was all she could get forth, "oh, Gerald!"

He took a turn up and down the room.

"Mrs. Brale," he began at last, speaking so low that he was just barely audible, "our friendship has gone on for some time. Like most things, apparently it has come to an end. I have not forgotten yesterday, and the—the —however, I need not refer to the matter now. . . . I had planned to go out of your life quietly and unprotestingly, after returning to you these various little gifts"—he waved a hand to the parcels on his desk—"which you were once pleased to make me. But I saw you last night. And I cannot say good-by without one word for old times' sake. It is a word of warning. Will you sit down?"

Mrs. Brale sank weakly into a chair, and Gerald drew up another, and surveyed her for a minute of sorrowful silence. Suddenly she began to cry, dabbing her eyes, her lips shaking, her round, flushed face screwed up absurdly like an infant's.

"Mrs. Brale," said Gerald bringing his fist down with a thump, "you were in grave danger last night. I know this man, Powers, and know him well. I know that he is interested in you for one thing only. Mrs. Brale, I swear to you that that man will try to win your affection for the sake of your money!"

"Oh!" She drew back tight against her chair with a start.

"It is only an act of decency," he went on, "to let you know this. I could not let anyone for whom I once felt as I felt for you fall into his unscrupulous hands. Let me give you fair and friendly warning. That man is no less than a parasite!"

"My!" said Mrs. Brale. "I didn't guess he was like that. I didn't even think! How fine of you to tell me all

about him. And Gerald—you're not thinking of leaving, are you? Oh, you're not!"

"I'm afraid that matter has already been settled. I can only ask you to see to the disposal of your presents."

"Gerald, if I tell you I'm sorry, if I tell you I'm terribly sorry, will you forgive me?"

"I'm afraid that's all over, Mrs. Brale."

"But I didn't mean to hurt you, I honestly didn't. Oh, I have no one but you in the whole world to care for. It would kill me. And I'll never be jealous again—never! And you're so clever and so handsome. Oh, please. . . ." Her voice faltered.

He had folded his arms and was looking away. "It's too late!" he whispered as if to himself.

Then she sank to her knees, debasing herself, her hands held up to him imploringly, the big tears gathering in her frightened, foolish eyes.

He dashed his arm across his forehead.

"Well," he got out in a stern voice. "This time, then. But it's the last! I promise you that. There are others who. . . ."

"Call me Myrtle," she begged with a face that had instantly grown ecstatic.

The tears in her eyes had become magically tears of joy.

"Oh . . . well . . . Myrtle."

"Gerald, I brought something for you. Those cigarettes you asked for. And—and try one now."

In the top of the box a fresh, hundred-dollar bill was visible. Gerald picked it out with alacrity.

"That's nice of you," he said heartily, "awfully nice." He patted her cheek, then kissed her in his elusive and perfunctory manner.

"Gerald," said Mrs. Brale, "I don't know what I really would do if I were to lose you. And I'm so glad you told me about that horrid man. And you won't try to see that—that woman again, will you? And, Gerald, I do love you so! Tell me that you love me?"

He pursed his lips, frowned, and said nothing.

She drew his reluctant hand towards her.

"Don't you, Gerald? Don't you at all?"

"Why, yes—I do—a little."

"Oh, Gerald," she began again in her fretful, childlike voice, "is it only a little? Don't you really care for me more than . . ."

In the rich, elaborate room, the murmuring voices continued to rise and fall drowsily, seeming in the stillness like the faint humming of bees.

V

Upon a day a week later and sometime in the neighborhood of four o'clock a woman was sitting in the lounge of the Café Lafayette. Those who strolled casually through the waiting-room or who, like herself, were there for an appointment, perceived that she was effectively attired and comely. Yet, if they regarded her further, they were inclined to think that her face was rather too impassive, and her eyes unaffectedly weary. She was the sort of woman (was their conclusion) who commands her own emotions, and may therefore be properly called heartless.

She had been waiting for nearly half an hour when a slim and foppish man, entering at a leisurely gait, came forward to meet her.

"Hello, Nella," said Pendleton Powers in an odd, slurring drawl. "Been waiting long?" He awarded her an oblique flash of appraisal.

As she rose to follow him into the room where old Frenchmen bent their heads over the chess-board or played a quiet game of dominoes, her face seemed to have undergone an astonishing transition.

The tiredness had sped from her eyes, and in its place a vague worry had settled. Impassiveness had fallen cleanly from her, and now a momentary quiver of nerves was betrayed by her lips.

"Well, Nella, did you get it?" the man asked, as he poured a floater of brandy into his glass of black coffee.

"Yes, I did. But it was hard. I tell you he's not easy."

"Have you it here?"

She passed him an envelope silently. He lifted the flap and glanced inside.

"Ah!" he said in his smooth, slurring voice, "that's good! . . . It's unfortunate that you've just lost your millionaire. Chepstowe's a poor substitute . . . but bleed him for all he's worth."

She was tearing at her glove with irritable fingers.

"Why should I?" she demanded in a sharp voice. "I wouldn't have to for myself. It's only for you. . . ."

"Clever girl!" he commented, sipping his coffee. "You're touched on the very reason. I'm, so to speak, dependent just at present. You happen to be necessary to me. And for a woman it's necessary that she be necessary. Not?"

She leaned forward. "I hate you!" she said in a whisper. "Oh, why did I ever meet you?"

"Fate, fate," he murmured with a polite sneer.

For a little while she was silent. Then she asked:

"Why do you dislike Chepstowe so? Why do you make me do this? Why do you—"

"I don't dislike Chepstowe. To hate a fool is to become one yourself. Dear little Nella, I'm no fool! And I don't want money to squander on things that make no return save headaches. It happens that I've gotten hold of a straight tip—an opportunity of the biggest sort. It's going to land me on Easy Street for a long while to come. And then I won't need to do—all this."

"What do you mean?" she asked, stirred a little by curiosity. "A tip on what?"

He puffed his cigarette for a moment. "Well, it does no harm to tell you, though it goes without saying that this is on the quiet. A big Copper Syndicate has been formed that's going to hit the sky. I get in on the ground floor. Hardly anyone knows about it. It's—but you wouldn't understand."

She threw up her head with a short laugh. "So it's the Stock Market! I understand enough to know that for a game in which the other side holds loaded dice. Tips! I've heard of them before—"

Pendleton Powers looked bored.

"Very well," he drawled, "we won't discuss it any more. But I happen to know what I'm talking about here. The essential thing for you, my dear, is not to meddle in what isn't comprehensible to you. In the meantime the situation before us continues. It's a damned odd one, isn't it? I find you of—some assistance, and you bleed Chepstowe, who bleeds Mrs. Brale, and she in turn sponges on Brale. I wonder whom Brale bleeds!"

"He doesn't have to," Nella remarked wearily. "He's the last link."

"There's no last link. The world's a chain, and in a manner of speaking we're all parasites together. Brale, you may be certain, squeezes his dollars out of someone or some portion of the public without giving the requisite return. No doubt of that, my dear!"

One of his phrases reëchoed in her ears.

"And you find me merely of some assistance?" she repeated slowly.

Her voice grew sharper and she stared at him with hurt eyes.

"Then it's only the dirty money after all? You admit it, do you?"

"Oh, my dear," he murmured reproachfully, "I shouldn't put it entirely at that! In a way I'm really fond of you, I—I think."

EYES THAT SEE NOT

By Jane Carter

"I MUST leave you," I said to Paul as through the palms I heard the violin sob the aria from "Butterfly," "or I shall be tempted to yield to your arms."

"I must not stay here," I said to Jim, moving from the darkened veranda. "An air from 'The Love Tales' frightens me when you are near."

The violin wailed the "Miserère." "My love is like that," I sobbed against Fred's shoulder.

When the "Toreador" tune was played on the violin: "Tall, big Man," I breathed to Lloyd, my lips near his.

. . . . .

Later, the musician put his violin aside and came to me.

Unshaven, unkempt, smelling of garlic, with soiled finger-nails, he knelt before me.

"Beautiful woman," he said to me, "I can make you love . . ."

I laughed in his face.

FIRELIGHT

By David Morton

WATCHING you slyly, with my hand for screen,
I see old, dim romances cross your face;
Just now you were a dark, imperious queen,
Loved of your savage king; and now I trace,
The thin, white, flying figure of a girl
Dancing your pagan dance in pagan lands,
And now, emerging from that maddening whirl,
A mother, tender in her hopes and hands.

Fainter than dreams, swifter than shadow-play,
One after one the old lives flicker past,
In changing forms that gleam and drop away,
Till suddenly you lift your eyes at last,—
And clear and glad, your soul looks out at me,
Without surprise, knowing it was to be.

KISSING ANNABEL

By Thomas Edgelow

I

"REALLY, someone *must* kiss poor Annabel," remarked Mrs. Van Stenler as she came out onto the porch for tea.

No one among the house party paid any particular attention to their hostess's demand—but then, of course, everybody knew that Muriel Van Stenler had, perforce, either to be startling, tearful, or bored to screams.

Generally at tea-time Mrs. Van Stenler preferred to be startling, except when her husband left Wall Street in time for the three-ten, on which occasions she generally cast her vote in favor of the tearful mood.

"I do wish somebody would say something when I make a remark like that," Mrs. Van Stenler went on as the butler settled her in a huge wicker armchair, "because it's really so disconcerting when one's guests will glump after a carefully thought-out remark that is not only clever but true. I repeat that somebody really must kiss poor Annabel."

Lucile Glenn passed the long thin glass which she held in a delicious little hand—for really, for a great heiress, Lucille was absurdly attractive—especially to Howard, who was in close attendance.

"Be an angel, Howard," Lucile said, with that suspicion of a Southern accent that caused the man in question to realize with even greater wonder than usual his enormous luck, "be an angel, and make them put more ice in my tea this time. But Muriel, why do you insist on being clever when it's so hot, and why must Annabel be kissed? Hasn't she been kissed? Won't anybody kiss her? Is she old—so old that nobody wants to? Is her face-powder all wrong, or what is it? Do explain yourself—don't expect us to be sympathetic or understanding on an afternoon like this."

Everybody leaned forward in their chairs, as the afternoon was hot even in the cool depths of the Van Stenler porch. Not that there were many *to* lean forward—for Mrs. Van Stenler's social position made it unnecessary for her to invite hordes of guests at one time.

There were only a few of them—Lucile Glenn who owned, since her father's death, lots of railroads and copper mines and things that enabled her, in spite of the war, to get all her most interesting things from Paris—Jimmie Howard, who never did anything but owe people, and who so recently had persuaded Lucile that he really could not contemplate the idea of life without her—since when all the trades people had gone out of their way to beg him not to worry about that little account—Mrs. Curton, whose divorce had made everything so comfortable for everybody, including Daisy Burton, who, although of the house-party, had not yet persuaded her that all the best divorcées always marry their co-respondents and who was smoking his twenty-third cigarette that day in the hopes of convincing his adored one that he had really only had one or two after breakfast—and George de Melles, who never missed a house-party if he could help it.

"Go on, Muriel," urged Lucile, "tell us all about things—and Annabel in

particular. Who is she, anyway?"

Mrs. Van Stenler bit lusciously into a chocolate eclair.

"I do wish they wouldn't make them so gooey—" she remarked complacently, "I mean the eclair, not the kisses or Annabel. But Lucile, you must know who she is—Annabel Pascal. I think they come from Virginia and Annabel goes everywhere."

"But really, don't you know," put in de Melles as he signalled to the servants for another highball, "that hardly explains anything, does it? Of course, I know Annabel Pascal—known her for Lord knows how many years, and I'm shot if she's such a bad looking woman either. Must be rising thirty-five or thirty-six, but still—"

He relapsed into his highball.

"Then why on earth," began Mrs. Curton, but Mrs. Van Stenler had finished her eclair and broke in hastily.

"Because she is Annabel," she summed it up enigmatically.

Jimmie Howard looked pathetically at his fiancée.

"I'm shot if I understand," he uttered.

"No one expects you to understand anything, darling," Lucile flashed at him, but in her eyes there was a hint of tenderness. "Unless it is your own past," she went on with a smile, "and *that* from what all my dear women friends tell me is enough for any man to attempt to understand."

"You see," Mrs. Van Stenler went on, "the trouble is that Annabel is so intense. That's the whole case in a nut-shell. No man would ever think of *marrying* her—one might as well contemplate marrying a Billy Sunday Revival Meeting! Not that Annabel is so religious but so awfully intense. Then she has principles, and no girl with only seven or eight thousand a year can possibly afford them. It's like having a Rolls-Royce—only the very rich can have them."

"Still, I've got a Rolls-Royce," objected Howard, "and I'm hanged if anybody would call me rich."

"But *you* are engaged to Lucile," put in Mrs. Curton somewhat cattishly.

"Which," remarked Lucile sweetly, "is one of the nicest things my money has been able to do for me—reform a rake like Howard and make our marriage perfectly possible."

That was Lucile all over. Never for an instant did she deny the absurd wealth that was hers, and yet so generous was the heart of the darling that it was difficult for her to show any rancour even to a woman of the Curton type.

"You none of you understand the situation," Mrs. Van Stenler interspersed, "and the girl will be here on the six-eight. I've made up my mind to reform her. You see, as I've told you, Annabel is all principle—and as no man has ever proposed to her, she has never allowed herself to be kissed!"

"But what have proposals got to do with kissing?" queried Howard.

Then, finding Lucile's eye fixed steadfastly on him, he hurriedly offered Burton a cigarette who took it surreptitiously and smiled his thanks.

"Annabel, *having* principles, Howard," returned Mrs. Van Stenler severely, "would not think of allowing a man any privileges to whom she was not engaged."

"What an awful case!" murmured de Melles more to himself than to the others.

"But why are you so keen on breaking down her hedge of morality?" queried Mrs. Curton.

"Oh, just because—I really don't know why—excepting that Annabel is so tiring," mused Mrs. Van Stenler. "I thought all you clever people might do some missionary work on her while she's down here. Surely you can think up some scheme."

"But who's to do it—the kissing, I mean?" asked Daisy Burton, glancing at Mrs. Curton.

"And what sort of a kiss is to awaken the principled beauty?" Lucile rippled before Mrs. Curton could say anything. "There are so many sorts of kisses—the purely affectionate—the passionate—the provocative—the—let

me see! Oh, I know—only I don't know what you call them—I think they are a specialty of Jimmie's."

"Really, Lucile," reprimanded Mrs. Van Stenler.

"Well, he ought to have had enough practice, from what I hear, to have originated a brand of his own," suggested Mrs. Curton.

"Anyway, I'm glad I'm not marrying a raw amateur," dared Lucile.

"But about Annabel," Mrs. Van Stenler insisted. "Who is going to take her in hand?"

"I know her and she ain't half bad looking," put in Howard, "but she's not my type. Besides—there's Lucile here."

"Don't mind me, dear," Lucile grinned.

"I wouldn't mind trying, only she disapproves of me," complained de Melles.

"Well, you can't blame her for that, can you?" Burton asked indifferently.

"I have it," suggested Mrs. Curton, "let the men draw lots."

"Excellent," agreed Mrs. Van Stenler. "And I'll give a gold cigarette case to the man to whose lot it falls and who succeeds. Quite seriously, I'm certain Annabel would be much happier if only someone would remove her absurd principles. We may as well begin with the kisses."

Burton produced an envelope from his pocket. Very deliberately he tore off some slips and, folding them up, placed them in an empty glass that stood on the tea table.

"The shortest gets it—kisses the girl, I mean," he announced as he shook up the papers.

Amid much talk and threatened epigrams, the die was cast. To everybody's amusement it was de Melles who drew the shortest slip.

"Well, I do hope that you will do something instead of just talking," Mrs. Van Stenler said as she got up in response to a summons to the telephone. "I'll give you quite a nice cigarette case if you succeed."

III

But it was not fated that de Melles should win the prize. Annabel, who arrived shortly afterwards, saw to that. She was a severe looking person in a demurely pretty way, was Annabel Pascal.

Essentially was she one of those women who count the number of strokes with which they brush their hair every night. She had greeted her hostess effusively—but then Annabel was effusive to all women on principles.

Besides, she felt that it was demanded by the laws that govern those who dispense hospitality and those who receive it.

In just the same way Annabel, long before she had arrived at the Van Stenler place, had made a note in a neatly-bound morocco book of the exact tips which she would disburse to the Van Stenler servants at the end of her visit. Then, too, Annabel was given to sudden friendships—of course for other women. She experienced one on her arrival, for, on beholding Lucile Glenn in all her delicate prettiness, Annabel had instantly fallen at her feet, as it were, with a figurative whoop of delight.

"You remind me so of someone who used to be very dear to me," Annabel remarked to Lucile after the former had forced her way into Lucile's room when the first bell had gone for dinner.

"Isn't that nice," Lucile returned, inwardly amused. "It makes one believe in reincarnation and all that sort of thing—don't you think?"

"Oh, how wonderful of you," Annabel replied intensely. "I knew that you could not be the mere social butterfly that so many girls are—and your remark just proves it to me. But you remind me so of a girl I used to know when poor papa was alive—Gwladys Girton was her name. She afterwards dropped altogether out of society by a most ill-chosen marriage. She fell in love with quite a common man—

but insisted on marrying him. I think he was an embalmer."

"An embalmer—an embalmer of what?" Lucile's dimples would dimple in spite of herself.

"Why, of bodies, of course!" Annabel returned perfectly seriously.

"Of bodies!" Lucile's laughter was unrepressed. "I'd so much sooner that mine was made a fuss of than embalmed—wouldn't you?"

"Oh, my dear—you mustn't talk like that. But then you're going to be married, aren't you—and that makes so much difference."

"Of course I'm going to be married—and very soon too—to Jimmie Howard, you know!"

Annabel turned sharply and regarded Lucile with all the intenseness of which she was capable. "To Jimmie Howard! Oh, I didn't know that."

"What about it?" At times Lucile's smile was wholly gamin.

"Why, nothing!"

Into Annabel's voice had come a hint of yearning tenderness—a tone of one who could speak but will not.

Immediately Lucile sensed her cue. Very seriously she forced herself to regard Annabel.

"Oh, please tell me," she said. "Do you mean—you mean—there is something I should know—about Jimmie?"

Annabel came and knelt by Lucile's side as she sat at her dressing-table.

"Oh, my poor," she crooned intensely. "Oh, my poor!"

Lucile began to enjoy herself immensely. Really the woman was far funnier than she could have hoped.

Closing her eyes, Lucile snuggled her head into Annabel's shoulder.

"Tell me," she urged, "tell me. Surely I have a right to know."

"I suppose I must." Annabel was more intense than ever. "I've only known you an hour or two, and yet something within me whispers that I was sent here with a purpose—to guide —to warn you. But you must be brave —you must be courageous. Courage before all."

"Oh, I will be," Lucile managed with difficulty.

"Then I must tell you that your fiancé—this Jimmie Howard—has a terrible reputation—a terrible past. He will not come to you as a bridegroom should—pure as the girl he takes."

Biting her lips to keep back her delighted chuckles, Lucile forced herself to a gravity unknown to her. "But he will reform—we must remember that men have temptations of which we know nothing! I'm certain that since he has known me—Jimmie has led a life of absolute purity! And think what it is to me to be able to contemplate that it is I who have led his feet onto —onto— Oh, you know where I've led them. I mean, that I've led them where they ought to go."

Annabel yearned over Lucile—to such an extent that after she had left her to finish dressing, Suzette, Lucile's French maid, declared with some asperity that it was impossible to turn Mademoiselle out as befitted Mademoiselle if zese 'orrible women disarranged all ze 'airs which before were so carefully in place!

But before dinner de Melles, whose man had served him with two cocktails as he was dressing, made his attempt to win the gold cigarette case.

Annabel, somewhat primly dressed by a modiste whose address was far removed from Fifth Avenue, was making her way down stairs, when de Melles came out of his room.

"Oh, one second, Miss Pascal," he called cheerily, and Annabel waited graciously for him.

Now, de Melles was not overburdened either with finesse or with patience. He had drawn the bally lot—hadn't he? Well then, it was only sporting to go through with it. He must kiss the girl and be done with it, only he wished that her clothes didn't remind him so of his rich maiden aunt.

Coming downstairs, then, de Melles fixed Annabel with his eye.

"You know, you do look—well you do, you know—don't you?" he began inanely. "And you know, Annabel—you don't mind me calling you Annabel, do you—because we've known each for a hell—I mean for a frightfully long time, haven't we—that is, not so very long, of course, for you're not so old—that is, I mean— Now look here, Annabel—you might be a sport, don't you know, looking like you do. I mean," and here de Melles' arm crept around Annabel's extremely corsetted waist—"I mean—"

As he finished his incoherent inanities, de Melles, who was short and pudgy as to figure, stood on tip-toe and attempted to fasten his somewhat alcoholic lips on the demure ones of Annabel Pascal.

III

It was somewhat ruefully later that de Melles explained what had happened.

"You know," he said to Daisy Burton as the two men had a final cigarette in the billiard-room late that night, "she biffed me one just as if she had been a house-maid. Rotten bad form, I call it. It wasn't as if I'd kissed her—not as though I had succeeded—but for all I care, Mrs. Van Stenler can give her cigarette case to the Red Cross before I have another shot. Tell you she biffed me one that made me see stars! I always did hate those beefy sort of women, and when you add beef to principles it becomes impossible. Say, Daisy old man—did you ever try and kiss a pretty house-maid? Well, if you did—and she didn't—cotton on, I mean—you know exactly how this Annabel woman behaved."

At least, Annabel Pascal showed no signs at dinner of the affair with Billy de Melles on the stairs. She was eminently herself—cool, calm, and very principled.

The conversation turned on plays, old and new, and it was Mrs. Van Stenler who insisted that Pinero's "The Gay Lord Quex" was one of the best plays ever staged.

"I went to a matinée—it was in London, you know, and I was so frightfully pleased with it that I made Anderson take me again at night. Do you remember, Andy?"

Anderson Van Stenler, a quiet little man who had three interests in life—his affairs in Wall Street, golf, and the alarming state of baldness that was rapidly becoming his—looked apprehensively at his wife.

"Sure, I remember," he agreed. "I believe it was the bed-room scene that so took you, Muriel."

"What an exceedingly improper remark from you, Anderson," his wife laughed.

"Oh, please tell me," insisted Lucile.

Annabel said nothing. She always felt uncomfortable when people of the Muriel Van Stenler type would talk in that way. Besides, why was it necessary to have bed-room scenes at all in plays? For there were lots of other rooms? For her own taste, Annabel liked a conservatory scene. There was something so romantic about the leading man proposing to the girl under a palm made of the thinnest possible metal, only to be told that she was already married to the man with the red hair and the patent leather shoes.

"I never saw it, as far as I can remember," put in Mrs. Curton somewhat drearily.

"The point is," went on Mrs. Van Stenler with all the joy of one who has seen a play of some note and is relating it to those who haven't, "that Lord Quex is frightfully in love with a girl—quite a young thing—and Quex has an awful reputation—just like Jimmie here."

"That's very sweet of you," Jimmie Howard granted, as, with a sentimentality that rivalled that of a grocer's assistant, he held Lucile's little hand under the table.

"But apart from the fact that he was rich—Quex, I mean—" Mrs. Van Stenler continued as she helped herself to an entrée, "he was really rather like you, Jimmie. The girl—Sophie—who was frightfully fond of Quex's fiancée,

did not want the marriage to take place. So she—Sophie—somehow or other got Quex alone in a bed-room so as to make a scandal and prevent the marriage. You know, I think it was one of the best plays I ever saw."

A buzz of conversation followed, but Annabel was silent. Into her eyes had crept a certain spirit of thoughtfulness. She looked first at Lucile and then at Jimmie. The dinner made its usual progress.

It was afterwards that someone suggested that they get out the canoes to see if the lake could possibly be cooler than the porch. Annabel, full of her new friendship, insisted with all the quiet obstinacy of a woman of her type that Lucile and she should share the same canoe.

"I feel that I must see more of you," she said as she slipped an affectionate arm around Lucile's waist. Then to Jimmie, "I'm afraid, Mr. Howard, that you will have to lend me Miss Glenn for an hour or so."

Jimmie Howard's remark was fortunately so muttered that Annabel's ears were not offended, and later everybody set out on the placid waters of the shallow lake.

It was on their return, after Mrs. Van Stenler had shouted to everybody through a megaphone that it was too boring for words and high time for supper to be followed by a little dancing, that either Lucile or Annabel upset the canoe in which they were seated.

As a matter of solid fact, there was about as much danger of drowning as there would have been in a full-sized bath tub, but it was Lucile who assisted the hysterical Annabel to shore.

Now gratitude, taken in large doses, can be a dangerous thing, and the gratitude of Annabel was only equalled by the intenseness of her fear of what she imagined she had escaped.

"Oh, how can I ever thank you enough, you plucky girl!" she enthused intensely to Lucile as the latter's maid with horrified exclamations in French was repairing the damage done to appearances. "No sacrifice that I can make could ever be too much after this."

It was in vain that Lucile pointed out that the water in the lake was at no place deeper than four feet. Annabel insisted that Lucile had saved her life, that her debt of gratitude could never be repaid and that from henceforth she was the devoted chattel of her who had risked so great a peril on her behalf.

Perhaps all this had its psychological effect, for the next morning Annabel descended to breakfast with determination written all over her. That she was the only one of the house party to turn up at that impossible meal made no difference to her plan. Annabel was determined. At whatever sacrifice to her personal feelings—even to her modesty—Annabel had fully made up her mind that so sweet a girl as Lucile should not be thrown away on a man whose past was as lurid as Jimmie Howard's.

It did not even make any difference to Annabel when she became aware that Jimmie and Lucile spent the whole morning together in the summer house that was snugly hidden away from prying eyes in the woods that skirted the house. On the contrary, it only made her the more determined—Lucile must be saved from herself.

IV

So IT was that Annabel took serious counsel with herself as to her apparel that evening. In the end, after many attempts in front of the long mirror on her bathroom door, Annabel decided on a clinging dress of violet chiffon that went well with her dark hair—with her demure but decidedly pretty face.

"I have a great favor to ask you, Mr. Howard," Annabel whispered alluringly into Jimmie's ear after dinner. "I am in great trouble and I do so want a man's judgment to help me—a man's arm on which to lean."

"Of course, if I can help," Jimmie smiled wickedly, "why, just tell me—but, I say, you do looking ripping tonight—Annabel." Then hastily: "I

know you're too good a sport to say anything to Lucile."

So her victim was even more pliable than she had expected—Annabel reflected. But, oh, the vileness of men! They were all alike. Not one of them could bear the strain of feminine temptation.

"But where can we talk this matter over?" Jimmie's tones were quite eager.

"I thought—I thought—" In spite of her gratitude, Annabel found the sacrifice to her principles almost too much.

"You thought what?" Jimmie urged cheerfully.

"I thought," Annabel faltered, "that as my business is so very confidential that it would be better if you were to come up to my room."

"Why, ripping — that's just the ticket," Jimmie enthused in a way to which he had no right.

Annabel closed her eyes and sighed, emitting a curious little sound as afterwards she drew in her breath with suppressed indignation. But at least she would save Lucile! At least her eyes should be opened. Not for nothing had Annabel witnessed "The Gay Lord Quex," and in her case it would not be necessary to go so far as in the play. Excusing herself for a moment from Jimmie's side, Annabel sought out Lucile's maid.

"Please tell Miss Glenn that I wish her to come to my room in exactly five minutes," she demanded. "Now, please make no mistake, for a lot depends on it. Let Miss Glenn come to my room in exactly five minutes from now."

Now there are many old tricks with a key, and perhaps the oldest is that one of pretending to lock the door and yet to leave it unlocked. Somewhat strenuously and with a great intentness of manner that would have aroused the suspicion of a ten-year-old child, Annabel employed this means, once Jimmie, all expectancy, was safely within the sacred precincts of her room.

"So you are really going to marry that dear girl?" questioned Annabel to gain time.

"No need to talk about her, is there —when you look so nice?" Jimmie returned with all a man's duplicity. "You know, why—"

Quickly he strode across the room.

For a moment Annabel was frightened. Had her self-sacrificing instinct carried her too far? All men are brutes. That with Annabel was an accepted theory past any form of argument. Still, Lucile would be there at any moment.

Then came to Annabel the one experience of her life.

Muttering to himself, "Here goes," Jimmie roughly caught Annabel in his arms and kissed her lips as though he could never let them go—*and to Annabel came the amazing revelation that Jimmie's kisses, instead of being repugnant to her, were distinctly pleasing.*

Still more to her surprise, when she came to consider the affair in the calm moments of the future, *Annabel returned those kisses as though she meant it,* but just at the moment—and just as Annabel was beginning to feel the most delicious abandon, the door was flung open and Lucile stood on the threshold.

With a tremendous effort of self-control, Annabel gained the mastery of herself. Passionately she poured out to Lucile the story of how she, imitating the heroine of "The Gay Lord Quex," and simply through a desire to save Lucile from an unhappy marriage, had sacrificed her personal inclinations and had actually allowed a man to kiss her!

And Lucile? Lucile's laughter floated musically through the house.

"But what a damn fuss to make about a kiss!" at last she managed.

V

So it was the very next morning that an outraged and yet dignified Annabel caught, with the aid of the Van Stenler servants, the eight-forty-two back to New York. And at the same time it was a subtly different Annabel who regarded on the one side the flying land-

scape as the train bore her swiftly south, and on the other, the men creatures who occupied the various seats in the Pullman.

And later it was Mrs. Van Stenler who presented to Jimmie Howard an exquisitely wrought gold cigarette case with his crest in brilliants.

"You know," Jimmie chuckled as he filled the new case with cigarettes, "Lucile ought to have this—because it was she who thought the whole thing out."

"But Jimmie," Lucile reminded him, "it was you who had to kiss poor Annabel."

A SONG OF HATE

By Waldo T. Davis

SHE hates him.

There are plenty of other men she does not like;—men that bore her, men that make her tired;—but him she hates.

She hates his bull neck and his red face. She hates his clothes and his neckties and the way he has his hair cut.

She hates his million dollar look and his continual bragging about his own greatness. She hates him for his contemptuous appraisal of men whom she likes who have not made good.

She hates him because he doesn't know that she hates him, because he is too thick skinned to see that she can't do anything else but hate him. That is the supreme insult.

Yet she is going to marry him. She must—or go to work.

THERE would be no arts, industries or science if it were not for women. In no other way than by the will of women could men be driven to abandon beautiful leisure for hateful work.

THE prejudices of man come from the mind and may be overcome; the prejudices of woman come from the heart and no one has ever succeeded in overcoming them.

IF you are in love with a woman, kiss her frequently and ignore her occasionally. If you want to make her fall in love with you, ignore her occasionally, and kiss her not at all.

THE desire to please is born in woman long before the capacity to love.

THE ETERNAL MOUNTEBANKS

By Alice King

SHE is going to be desperately ill. It seems incredible—my splendid, healthy baby, who has never known even a day's sickness—it has come so suddenly—

I have sent for the doctor. The baby's fever is high, her breathing labored. The dread word "pneumonia" has hovered in my consciousness all morning. My only thought is for her safety. But why, when the bell rings, do I find myself before the mirror, tucking in wayward curls that have escaped? The doctor is neither young nor handsome. He is impersonal—businesslike. I hate myself that I should arrange my hair for him.

He has gone. The fear is a certainty. The baby has pneumonia. There is nothing for me to do but sit beside her and wait. All the practical details will be for the nurse when she comes.

* * * * *

Nearly four days. The doctor expects a crisis this afternoon. The nurse is resting this morning, to be ready to stay up tonight, and I am here alone. What an exquisitely modeled face it is as it lies on the pillow! The dark hair is rumpled away from the flushed cheeks and forehead, the red lips parted in the short breaths of feverish sleep. She is more to me than anything in life—this little child. If she should die—I shudder away from the word. My woman's thoughts, unguided, travel in quick succession. . . .

Would one wear mourning for such a little, little baby? I have never cared for mourning—wearing it seems a barbarous custom. And for a child!—Would people criticize? The conventional always censure any departure from custom— Black is becoming to a high color— My mother! I will have to telephone her that the little grandchild—

My husband and the doctor will be in the next room. They will exchange glances as I, with no thought of my own bitter grief, try to lessen the shock for her. I can go into charitable work— I shall never have another child—

The nurse has come back. She urges me to lie down for a time, as I may need my strength later on. I comply, because I am too tired to argue. All the time, somewhere in my consciousness, is a picture of a young mother with pale, set face, sitting by the bedside of her little child—lips firm, showing a wonderful self-control. It excites the admiration of doctor and nurse alike. Many women grow hysterical—I am not that kind—

* * * * *

I am awake. How long have I slept? The room is almost dark, and the house quite still. I look up, and see the nurse standing in the doorway.

"The fever is down; she is sleeping quietly," she says in a matter-of-fact tone.

I find myself saying merely, "That's good." In my mind is a sense that now is the moment to sink into my husband's arms and sob out my heart, since the strain is over. He comes in, and I reach out my hand to him. He sits down beside me, and we smile quietly into each other's eyes. Then we go, hand in hand, into the nursery, and stand beside the little crib. We are alone. All that nightmare of thoughts is over for me—there is only a

great thankfulness that our baby is to live.

But somewhere, deep in my heart, lies bitterness, a feeling of guilt—shame. It comes to all women, at one time or another—in the angry, baffled, hopeless fight against endless generations of pettiness, of play-acting, of—well, of dishonesty. How can women be sincere—straightforward? How can you expect it, you who, through all the centuries, have implanted within them the thought of how they must appear—the insidious double consciousness? How could they be man-honest if they would?

QUI MAL Y PENSE

By Elsie McCormick

THE sweet young girl was terribly annoyed.
She had dropped her garter on the station platform.

It was a very pretty garter, as fluffy and delicate as a maiden's soul, an object that would bind itself inextricably around the fancies of any man who saw it. Besides, she knew all about that gay old French monarch's remark on a similar occasion, and her mother had told her that a real lady would be respected under all circumstances.

But the sweet young girl was terribly annoyed.
She had dropped her garter on the station platform.
And there was not a soul in sight.

WHILE WALKING

By Maxwell Bodenheim

THE pine-trees play with sun-light
Like earnest thoughts grown old with waiting
And shaking in a sudden flood
Of quivering, golden happiness.
And yet, we do not envy them,
Because our dancing hearts are drenched
With happiness that makes sun-light
Seem but a fire-veined shadow!

MANY a woman would laugh at the funeral of her husband if it were not for the pallbearers and her black veil.

CONTE D'UN SOIR DE BATAILLE

By Florian-Parmentier

ILS étaient restés longtemps évanouis sur le champ de bataille.

Et à présent, ils se dirigeaient vers le village voisin pour y passer la nuit, précédés d'un garde qui s'était offert à leur montrer la route. Ils sortaient d'une minable guinguette, à demi renversée par un obus, où on les avait quelque peu réconfortés. Le garde, en agitant ses jambes torses dans le cloche de sa blouse, réfléchissait à la situation; et de temps en temps il se retournait en frappant sur son bicorne, comme pour faire jaillir de son esprit trop lourd les plaisanteries qui doivent donner du prestige à un représentant de l'autorité.

— C'est pas pour dire, fit-il, mais vous avez eu le nez fin en me rencontrant. C'était ben tout dret, le chemin, comme vous disiez, faute que vous le suiviez, mes gâs, dans le sens contraire!

— Si vous appelez ça "tout dret"! riposta l'un des soldats. Le diable n'y connait goutte dans tous ces tours et ces détours!

— Faut voir si nous retrouverons jamais le bivouac, dit un autre.

Le garde, atteint dans sa dignité, frappa sur la boucle de son ceinturon et assujettit son bicorne.

— Corbleu! s'exclama-t-il, je crois que je connais la route, puisque je suis l'agent cantonal!

Sur ces mots, il trébucha et, abaissant sa lanterne vers les cadavres qui jonchaient le sol:

— Hé! cria-t-il, prenez garde à la culbute; il y a ici des morts qui font des crocs-en-jambe.

— Pauvres bougres! fit un soldat en manière d'oraison funèbre.

Le Français est insouciant et jovial, même dans les circonstances les plus tragiques. La nuit était horriblement noire. L'odeur du sang avait quelque chose de maléfique. Il fallait dissiper les fantômes et faire paraître le temps moins long. Les facéties allèrent leur train.

— Cristi, pas moyen d'avancer dans ce cimetière. Voyez-vous ça! dans ce pays, on met les pierres en-dessous et les morts pardessus!

Et, comme ils avaient trouvé à boire dans la guinguette qu'ils venaient de quitter, l'un d'eux ajouta:

— M'est avis, mon vieux, que nous tombons de dière en cercueil.

A quoi le voisin répondit:

— Laissons là cercueil et tombeau.
Mais, puisque nous parlons de bière.
Mieut vaut sortir la bière du pot.
Que laisser sa peau dans la bière.

Ce ne fut qu'une exclamation:

— Hé! hé! Griffard qui fait des vers!

— Hein? les amis, ça vous la coupe!

Piqué au jeu, un camarade répliqua:

— Pour prolonger la rime, mon vieux Griffard, des verres.
Tu devrais en servir de ceux qui désaltèrent.

— Ça ne vaut rien, dit Griffard, songeant à la rime.

— Comment; Si on buvait encore un coup, je te promets que ça ne ferait que du bien. Pas vrai, vous autres?

— Ventre-saint-gris! on en boirait même bien plusieurs!

Mais le garde, qui aurait voulu placer sa rime et ne parvenait pas à la trouver, intervint sur un ton important:

Vous oubliez que vous êtes avec un représentant de la Loi. Et la Loi punit les ivrognes.

— Ah! toi, bien sûr, il faut que tu grognes! plaisanta Griffard.

Les rires fusèrent, et les brocards.

— Tu n'as jamais regardé ta trogne?

— Il a bu plus que toute la Pologne!

— Et pas de la bière, lui: du Bourgogne!

— A toutes les barriques, faut qu'il rogne!

— Puis à tous les murs il se cogne!

— Regardez-le: s'il se renfrogne! . . .

Alors, le garde se retourna et, dépité, lança une injure.

Cette fois, il l'avait attrapée, la rime; mais c'était en lâchant la raison . . .

Comme ils badinaient de la sorte, les soldats aperçurent devant eux un homme accroupi et une lanterne. Ils approchèrent. L'inconnu était penché sur un blessé. Une trousse d'ambulance s'ouvrait à côté de lui. Sa besogne l'absorbait tellement qu'il n'avait pas entendu venir la petite troupe. Tout à coup, il leva la tête et eut un mouvement de recul en se voyant entouré de soldats.

Il se dressa.

Les camarades ne songeaient plus à rire. L'homme qu'ils venaient de surprendre était un officier prussien.

Le prissonier ne tenta aucune résistance. Ses yeux étaient remplis de larmes. Il regardait avec anxiété le blessé qui gisait à terre. Visiblement, il lui importait peu d'être emmené en captivité ou fusillé, mais ce mourant lui inspirait la plus douloureuse inquiétude.

— Permettez continuer, dit-il enfin, rassemblant péniblement le peu de français qu'il possèdait. Je peux pas laisser mourir . . . frère . . . mon frère . . . Je . . . l'aimer tant! . . .

Il retomba à genoux auprès du blessé, embrassa ses joues glacées, le regarda avec des yeux qui semblaient le supplier de vivre. Puis il saisit une petite fiole et en versa le contenu entre les lèvres du moribond.

Celui-ci s'agita. Ses paupières s'ouvrirent. Ses dents se desserrèrent.

— C'est toi? dit-il en allemand.

Ces simples mots rendirent l'officier comme fou de joie. Ses larmes coulèrent abondamment. Il se mit à pétrir ce pauvre cher visage de ses mains fiévreuses at à la couvrir de baisers.

Au bout de quelques instants, il se leva et dit aux soldats:

— Je . . . avais . . . promettre . . . le ramener . . . à notre vieille mère . . . vivant . . . vivant . . . Jeune soldat . . . mon frère . . .

Il s'expliquait comme il pouvait, sans songer à qui il parlait, simplement, sans supplications, comme inconscient des réalités.

Les soldats, tout à l'heure si gouailleurs, se sentaient très émus. Ils ne trouvaient pas un mot à dire. Chacun éprouvait confusément qu'une parole maladroite en ce moment aurait paru comme sacrilège.

Pourtant Griffard finit par élever la voix.

— Eh bien! dit-il, nous n'allons tout de même pas laisser cet homme par terre?

— C'est vrai, ça, fit le garde en enfonçant son bicorne. Je me demande ce que vous attendez!

Ils n'attendaient que ce signal, les braves soldats. Avec mille précautions, ils soulevèrent le blessé et, lui faisant un brancard de leurs bras, ils se remirent en marche, le plus doucement qu'ils purent.

L'officier suivit en silence, soutenant la tête de son frère.

Tout à coup, il regarda autour de lui, et, comme s'il revenait de très loin, il s'exclama, avec l'accent de la plus vive surprise:

— Etonnants . . . les Français . . . braves gens! . . . Jamais vu cela, à la guerre . . . A la guerre . . . tuer toujours . . .

— Ah! répliqua Griffard, c'est que nous venions de dire des blagues . . . Chez nous, on aime, ça, voyez-vous. Et il n'y a rien comme de rire tout son saoûl pour vous nettoyer le cœur à fond!

— Subséquemment, conclut le garde en envoyant un coup de poing à son bicorne, c'est à moi que votre frère doit la vie, car leur bonne humeur, les mâtins, c'est sur mon compte qu'ils se l'étaient payée. . . .

THE DEMOCRATIC THEATER

By George Jean Nathan

TO an appreciable extent, the persistent poverty of our national stage may be said to be due to the dissemination and promiscuous swallowing of the second-hand theory of such well-meaning but naïve old birds as the Messrs. Brander Matthews, Richard Burton and troupe, the theory, to wit, that the theater is essentially a democratic institution and must so remain or perish from the earth. Imposing structures of conscientious piffle have been reared upon this foundation. The gospel has been hung around the neck of the college boy, disembogued in the lecture chamber, cuckooed by the Drama Beleaguers. And yet, at bottom, one finds it as absurd and inutile as the paragrandine or the New York State Adultery Act. Not absurd and inutile, true enough, when trajected and practised by the frank hawker of theatrical assafœtida, but worse than absurd and inutile when exhibited by the critic or commentator professing a cultural standard somewhat above that obtaining in a young girls' finishing school or Columbia University.

From any plane of esthetic criticism higher than that from which one appraises the literature of Mrs. E. Burke Collins, the art of Austin O. Spare and Frederick Carter, the music of Ernest R. Ball, the drama of George V. Hobart—or the dramatic criticism of such Drama League bell-wethers—the theater is to be necessarily regarded as an institution of an essential aristocracy: an aristocracy of beautiful letters, of ideas and wit, of viewpoint and philosophy. To hold the contrary, to hold the theater a mere recess pasture for the potwallopers, a suave dive for the proletarian taste on the loose, is to make shift to establish and appraise an art in terms of the number of its admirers—to place a lithograph of Fatty Arbuckle above Rembrandt's portrait of Turenne, "The Very Idea" above Rittner's "En Route," or the autopsies of Rabindranath Tagore above those of Rammohun-Roy. If it be true that the theater is intrinsically a democratic institution, a saloon for the locofocos, then it is equally true—and clearly—that the dramatic criticism concerned with this institution must amount to little more than a rebabbling of the mob esteems and projection and coronation of the mob criteria. And, being from this point of view true, one doubtless discovers here an accounting for the emptiness and banality of such dramatic criticism as the *curriculacocci* periodically unload upon the public prints.

From that side of the theater which has been regarded as democratic, there has come down to us most of the rant and jabber, most of the pish and platitude, that in very slightly disguised form contrives still to overawe and enchant the pleasure-seeking skipjack and confound any man who has arrived at a sufficient altitude of scholarship to be able to differentiate between Meyerbeer and Ruppert's. From that side has come the stuff of such as D'Ennery and Cormon, Bulwer-Lytton, Sardou, John M. Morton, Mrs. Henry Wood, Dumas *fils*, Boucicault — the "Two Orphans," the "Toscas," the "East Lynnes," the "Camilles" and the "Boxes and Coxes." From the side of aristocracy, from the theater designed originally for the elect, have come the Molières, whose Palais-Royal company

was authorized "the troupe of the King," the Shakespeares, who came under the patronage of the circles of King James and Elizabeth, the Ibsens, who had to look to an artist of the violin for their first practical theatrical encouragement and who "had to make their way against the dullest and most disheartening of mob influences," the Hauptmanns, who were given to the theater in the cradle of the anti-herd Freie Bühne of Otto Brahm and Paul Schlenther, and on down the list to the Bernard Shaws of the moment who, for their first hearings, have had to rely on private societies and closed doors. The democratic theaters have been the theaters of Sir Augustus Harris and Daniel Frohman; the aristocratic theaters those of Stanislawsky and Dantschenko, André Antoine and Lugné Poë, Max Halbe and Josef Rüderer. The democratic theater of our more recent America has given us, as among its most popular examples, "Way Down East," "The Old Homestead" and "Experience." This same democratic theater has given us, as among its most summary failures, the plays of Molnar, Brieux, Hauptmann, Galsworthy, Brighouse, Donnay, Hervieu, Capus, Bahr, Chesterton. . . .

Statistics are the refuge of the unimaginative. I shall refrain from physicking you with the one hundred and one chronicles that, like a witch's wand out of Grimm, transform the professor-critics into so many asclepiadaceæ. I shall omit a recording of such statistics as concern the Moscow Artistic Theater, that amazingly successful and tonic institution which was based on the theory of exclusiveness and insured that exclusiveness by being among other things the most expensive of Russian playhouses, its admission fees surpassing the charges even of the Imperial Theaters. Or of such statistics as relate to the so-called undemocratic private theaters of the Enemy Nation, happy enterprises that have borne the torch of a finer and better drama into the Teutonic conscience and the consciences of further-flung countries—the theaters of such as Reinhardt, Grube, Dumont and Lindemann. Everyone save the professor-critics must already be privy to such dry news of the yesterdays. The critic who in this day views the theater as a democratic institution is the critic who views the novel as a democratic institution, and so holds Miss Leona Dalrymple a more accomplished and accomplishing craftsman than Anatole France, Enrico Butti or Joseph Conrad. . . . Art, to heap bromuret on bromide, is ever a butler in Childs'.

But there is small call for the professorial *cameriere* to worry. Our theater remains perfectly safe for the mob. For one evening with Shaw at even his worst ("Misalliance"), one evening the humour of which is at least derived from characters falling upon one another's ideas instead of upon their own plump-places, there is still a luxuriance of procursive epilepsies in which imprisoned emotional actresses bang and bawl vainly for help against locked doors, with a telephone in plain sight not two feet away ("Branded"), and in which ("Lombardi, Ltd.") a hot-blooded Italian magnificently declines to kiss his beloved until she is duly married to him.

In a democratic theater, the best in drama and dramatic literature must inevitably fail. In a democratic, or mob, theater there can prosper no satire, for satire presupposes a blasé mind and attitude, whereas the mob mind and attitude is ever the mind and attitude of a child looking into a shop window at Christmastime, dismayed at the wonders of paint and tinsel. Satire inverts the popular opinion and pours the sawdust out of that opinion. To the popular opinion, therefore, satire is, clearly enough, incomprehensible, unintelligible. The popular play is that play which pours the sawdust not out, but *in:* the play that enthrones ignorance, flatters unfounded vanity; the play, in short, that stuffs the greatest amount of excelsior into the wax doll. So, too, straightforward psychology must fail, straightforward transcription of

moods, feelings and reactions, for, save in the more primitive forms of melodrama and farcical comedy, the mob is stranger to the characters of authentic drama and anesthetic to their impulses, thoughts and deportment. In a country like our own, where the average man thinks himself a devil when the manicurist, on finishing her chore, gives him a familiar little tap on the hand, it is unlikely that a brilliant searching into the pathology of amour, such, for example, as is instanced in that excellent scene in Act II of "Over the 'Phone," will meet with appreciation or understanding. Schnitzler is not for the man in whose veins flows the hot czardas blood of Pottstown, Pa. De Curel is not for the woman the supreme passion of whose life has consisted in an ocular liaison with the celluloid ghost of Mr. W. S. Hart, nor John Galsworthy for the otherwise good citizen whose idea of dramatic literature is anything with a pistol in it.

The democratic theater, the world over, is a theater whose constituents are interested solely in such dramatic pieces as reflect their own thoughts and emotions, as repeat to their ears those things they already know and feel. To determine the quality of the democratic theater, therefore, it is but necessary to catalogue the qualities of the audience of that theater. What, for example, does the average native theater audience believe? Not the above-the-average audience one encounters periodically when a play of merit dawns upon the community, but the audience one sees nightly in the average show-shop of commerce? In the first place, the sum total of its book knowledge—I think I am not too unfair—is probably that of the public high-school pupil in his second scholastic year. In the second place, the sum total of its worldly knowledge is probably that of the average moderately well-to-do suburban shopkeeper. In the third place, the sum total of its emotional and esthetic adventure may be approached in terms of a composite of professional baseball game, phonograph, street-car flirtation and California claret. In the fourth place, the sum total of its common faith may be indicated, impressionistically, in its belief that the farmer is an honest man and greatly imposed upon; that, in Mencken's phrase, morality consists in the repeal of physiology by law; that a sudden chill is a sign that somebody is walking over one's grave; that some ignoble Italian is at the bottom of every Dorothy Arnold *fugax;* that all male negroes can sing; that a tarantula will not crawl over a piece of rope; that rich men always go to sleep at the opera; that Paderewski can get all the pianos he wants for nothing; that Gavarni was a composer and Debureau a painter; that minestra is the name of a particular kind of Italian soup; that Henry James never wrote a short sentence; and that all dachshunds come from Germany.

The theatrical stimuli to which this audience gives emotional response are correlatively ingenuous. Any scene, however badly written, in which an actor comes out on the stage carrying a dog that is supposed to have been run over by a motor-car driven by the villain, will set the audience to polyphonous sniffling and to an almost audible vituperation of the heinous chauffeur. And any scene, however crude, that exhibits an inebriated gentleman in the act of disrobing for bed without removing his top hat, will with equal certainty brew a series of amazing guffaws. It is needless to elaborate on this theme: if you search for further examples, I refer you to one of the best treatises on the subject that has ever come to my attention, a treatise which appears in a volume of admirable critical papers entitled "Another Book on the Theater." But the facts are plain, and unmistakable. A first-rate play is four times in five doomed by these tokens to failure in the mob theater.

I speak here not alone of our American mob theater, though it is unfortunately true we are vastly worse in

this regard than the overseas nations. The outstanding mob theater, in almost any country one elects, is comparatively the theater of parageusia, the barrack of balderdash, the cow-house of art. The mob theater of London disgorges "A Little Bit of Fluff" and "Mr. Wu" and "Bella Donna." The esoteric theater of London, typified by such institutions as the Incorporated Stage Society and the Play Actors, gives us "Change" and "Points of View," "Chains" and "The Polygon"—the plays of men like Shaw and Francis, Moore and Yeats, Brighouse and Bennett, in the place of plays by such Strand Ibsens as Cecil Raleigh and Bernard Fagan. The mob theater of Paris gives us "Samson," "La Rampe" and "La Flambée"; the artistocratic theater, "Barbarine" and Bruneau's "Faute de l'Abbé Mouret" out of Zola, and "L'Eau de Vie." The mob theater of Berlin unloads such so-called crook and bull plays as "Piquebube" and "Excellenz Max"; the theater of the elect provides Hauptmann and Wedekind and Ludwig Thoma. In the mob theater of Vienna we find such militant, obstreperous twaddle as August Riemer's "Austria Has All the Virtues"; in the aristocratic theater, Felix Salten. I allude in these latter instances, clearly enough, to what is confessedly the mob theater, for in all countries save the Anglo-Saxon—whether in Russia or France or Italy or in the enemy lands—the essentially democratic theater is overshadowed by the theater of suavity and distinction. Yet the mob theater, wherever you find it and when find it you do, is the theater of lost ideals. . . . Laugh if you will at the lamented New Theater of New York, but the truth about that theater is that, during the period of its initial isolations and snobberies, it produced more good plays than were ever produced during a like period in the history of any other American playhouse.

II

AMONG the plays that might tend to make the local theater unsafe for the multitude is the "Misalliance" of Shaw, lately presented in the Broadhurst Theater. Between the acts of this play, my colleague, Mr. Clayton Hamilton, proclaimed to me that if ever he wrote a play so deficient in the matter of structural technique, he hoped I would shoot him. Now, I am fond of Hamilton, and I am not disposed to shoot him until his turn comes (there are something like five colleagues on the waiting list ahead of him), but I am always willing to oblige a friend. Especially when he so mistakes a remarkable proficiency in structural technique for a deficiency. The truth about Shaw, of course, is that he understands the accepted structural technique so well that he is able to discard it. The best business man in the theater today (I refer you to his illuminating correspondence with Harold Brighouse), he appreciates that what makes money in the theater is novelty, and that since the accepted play-writing technique lacks novelty, the best way to make money is to reject that technique and substitute for it a technique that is unusual and unconventional. Shaw has made, to date, two hundred and twenty thousand dollars out of the theater. His royalties are fifteen per cent, flat, of the gross—and they have come to him at this rate from America, England, Germany, France, Austria and Russia. And, while making this money, he has at the same time made a striking reputation for himself as the wittiest, freshest and most unusual dramatic author of his time. And how has he done these things? He has done them, very simply, by doing what no one else has been doing. To believe that Shaw, who has been writing for the theater for twenty years, who is a man of education and vision, and who is the leading dramatist of the Anglo-Saxon theater—to believe that this man has tried vainly to master the sort of structural technique that such a Piccadilly bunkbutcher as Horace Annesley Vachell contrived easily to master at the first crack, is indeed a job for the super-yogi.

It is claimed by some that did Shaw understand the technique which he currently foregoes, his plays would be better plays. In other words, that if he wrote his plays in accordance with the ritual of Sardou or Emile Augier, those plays would be greatly improved. To me, at least, this seems much like arguing that Richard Strauss' solos for baritone and orchestra would be much better if the composer had written them after the formulæ of Verdi, or that Paul Cézanne were a more agreeable painter did he emulate the feminine perfumeries of Henner. That Shaw understands perfectly the technique of the theater is evident to anyone who cares to go to the trouble of studying closely his plays, and their effect upon a theatrical audience. If ever there lived a so-called sure-fire dramatist, Shaw is that man. (*Ref. Lecture III, Augustin Hamon, Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Paris.*) "Your technique," Hamon has written to Shaw, "is that of the great comic writers of the ancient Greeks and Latins, of the Middle Ages, of the Elizabethan period, of Molière, of Le Sage and of Beaumarchais. And your technique is that of these latter by reason of your comic wit. And in the future, no one will be able to write a high comedy of ideas and of characters without using this technique which is inherent and necessary to this form of comedy." But more than this, Shaw has brought to this technique an executive showmanship doubtless hitherto unmatched in the instance of a first-rate man of the theater. He is at once an artist and an excellent business man, a mixture of Royal Academician and Gimbel Brothers.

That Shaw understands thoroughly the sure-fire of the theater, the most positively provocative devices, and that he adroitly employs these devices on the numerous occasions when the dollar-grabber in him gets the better of the artist, should be manifest to anyone who has observed even a small part of his work. When he makes Dudgeon strut like a hero, the laugh is as sure-fire as when Richard Harding Davis makes Willie Collier strut like a hero in the last act of "The Dictator." The drunk Patiomkin in "Great Catherine" is as sure-fire a laugh-getter as the drunk Leon Errol in "Hitchy-Koo"; the allusion to the portly Mrs. Warren as a sparrow as sure as the allusion to the chambermaid in "Mary's Ankle" as a cheese; the sudden propulsion of Edstaston upon his rearo as sure as the similar business disclosed upon the stage of the Columbia Theater. He is privy to the guffaw-sesame of the cuss word; of the repeated mispronunciation of a character's name, as with the Szczepanowska in "Misalliance," a sure-fire device that was one of the Hoyt standbys and is currently relied upon by such comiques as Raymond Hitchcock and George Munroe; of word reiteration, as in "Candida," after the manner of Sam Bernard's "Sufficiency"; of the irrelevant employment of precise language in a slang situation, as in the case of a De Wolf Hopper curtain speech; of the mimicry of one character by another, as in "You Never Can Tell," a trick being used currently at the end of the first act of "Business Before Pleasure" and gaining the loudest laugh of the season. He is privy, too, to the irresistible tear that lurks ever in the scene of leave-taking (as in "Cæsar and Cleopatra"), and in the scene of sympathetic rejection of an ill-favoured suitor (as in "Candida"). And he knows, as well, the sure-fire trick of smashing glass ("Misalliance"), the trick of melodramatic bugle-calls and stabbings and general hullaballoo ("Cæsar and Cleopatra"), the trick of suave smut (there is a startling example in "Misalliance"), the trick of sensational smut ("Mrs. Warren"), and the trick of bringing on the marines of the U. S. S. *Santiago* to rescue the hero in the grand finale ("Brassbound").

Imagine a man like this, *mon cher* Hamilton, a man admitted to be one of the two greatest living dramatists, a man whose plays have been done in every civilized country under the sun,

a man whose vision is the best in all England, a man whose influence has been felt in every theater save the theater of Spain and Italy—imagine such a man, *mon très cher* Hamilton, being unable to write, if write he would, the technically exact sort of plays written by Mr. Willard Mack!

III

As I have frequently observed, there is no producer in the American theater the equal of Mr. Belasco when the question is one of frank melodrama. Abroad, his only peer in this regard is Maurey. Give this man a melodrama soever intrinsically tin-pot and he will produce it for you in a way to convince you anew of his very exceptional dexterity in the maneuvering of the purely external values and surface gyrations of the popular stage. His skill in this direction is once more exhibited in the case of Mr. Willard Mack's melodrama, "Tiger Rose," on view in the Lyceum, and this skill is made the more emphatic by the extreme banality and shoddiness of the manuscript to which he has elected to deal his *tour de force*. In itself, the melodrama is of a piece with Levin C. Tees' 10-20-30 classic, "Tatters, the Pet of Squatters' Gulch," to which, indeed, from the nature of its heroine and her rescue of her beloved from the Vigilantes to the final scene in the deserted cabin, it bears a family resemblance. The girl is here a French-Canadian instead of a Western prairie flower and the Vigilantes are here the Royal Mounted Police; but the vindictive pursuit of the murderer, and so on, are in each at bottom alike. But upon the ancient and venerable order of this stuff, Mr. Belasco has visited a coggery so diplomatic, so elaborate and adroit, as to conceal from the promiscuous eye the sterility of such ingredients as the old trap-door business out of "The Ticket-of-Leave Man," the clock hiding-place business out of "Raffles" and the long-lost-relative business out of melodramas without end. Where, for example, the second act of the manuscript revealed a long dull stretch during which he appreciated an audience's attention would be lost, Mr. Belasco saw to a rectifying of the condition by putting in a remarkably realistic rain and thunder storm—doubtless the best the stage has ever showed. That this arbitrarily injected rain storm has no bearing upon the play itself, indeed even goes so far as to contravene and confound what follows, since the rain would have washed away the tracks of the fugitive which the villain (probably still thinking of the original manuscript, since he is also the author), in the subsequent act says he followed, is no objection. Nor is there objection to the beautiful sunrise in the last act, which conveniently sets and plunges the scene again in night immediately there is call for a melodramatic dark scene. Such things are the things that make melodrama effective, and no one knows better than Belasco how to manage them and how by their employment to project a melodramatic manuscript over the footlights. But what a man to waste his time with such plays!

A word in compliment of Miss Ulrich, who has the leading role. This woman is today not only the most proficient actress under the Belasco direction, but is at the same time one of the two most expert interpreters of what may be called ingénue dramatic roles in the American theater.

IV

If, at a play by Miss Clare Kummer, the person seated next one happens at an inauspicious moment either to blow his nose or cough, one completely misses the plot. For the mazy *conte*, the fable fruity in labyrinths and alarums, the theme of operose twists so dear to the heart of the Broadway showmaker, the lady—and wisely—has small use. Her method is to take over the first serious Broadway problem play plot that comes to hand, give it a farcical slant and then, before display-

ing it to her public, to throw it away altogether. What remains may be roughly described as a series of entr'-actes illuminated with a humour alternately fluffy and fantastic, and the net impression one takes away from this residue is that of having spent a couple of hours less in a theater than with a woman whose charm rests in the circumstance that she appreciates the feminine advantage of drollery over wit. Although she has been widely credited by the gazetteers with being a wit, Miss Kummer is nothing of the sort. In all her three plays she has, to the best of my recollection, said not more than two witty things. Miss Kummer's mind is not a witty mind; it is a roguish mind—the sort that pursues wit and, if it never quite catches up with it, at least contrives now and then to sprinkle a bit of salt on its tail. But what pleasant talents this writer possesses were made more clearly visible in her brace of prevenient theatrical compositions than in "The Rescuing Angel," her present. This latter is strained and self-conscious and, while true enough superior to much of what passes current on Broadway for farce comedy, is yet pretty thin fare. Mr. Hopkins' staging of the play, as always a conscious or unconscious patterning after the method obtaining in the theater of Victor Barnowski, is of an exceptionally attractive air and poise. But the scenery of Mr. Robert E. Jones, to which Mr. Hopkins is addicted, is becoming as stupid as the Drama League brochures which eulogize it.

Other things. "The Land of the Free," by the Misses Fannie Hurst and Harriet Ford—trash. "Saturday to Monday," by William Hurlbut—a further lamentable wasting of effort on the part of Mr. Winthrop Ames. The latter has now produced, one after the other, "Hush," "The Morris Dance" and this last nihility, when all the time he has had on his desk such vastly better things as Paul Apel's "Hans Sonnenstösser" and Hermann Bahr's "The Yellow Nightingale." "Mother Carey's Chickens," by Rachel Crothers, from the novel of the name—sweet mush. "Lombardi, Ltd.," by the Chicago Strindbergs, the Hattons,—sour mush. "The Claim," by Kenyon and Dare—a servant-girl melodrama proving with much effort that a mother loves her child.

"Eve's Daughter," by Alicia Ramsey—the conventional attempt to pop the yokel with the situation exhibiting the villain and the virgin in the secluded suite. A rewriting of "The Three Daughters of Monsieur Dupont" by Elinor Glyn. "The Barton Mystery," by Walter Hackett — Chesterton's "Magic" rewritten by Old Cap Collier. A naïve alloyage of psychical research and "Who Killed Cock Robin?" "Chu Chin Chow," by Oscar Asche—"Ali Baba" related in a series of very beautiful stage pictures. A spectacle of luscious movement and lovely colour which deserves more space than is here left me. I shall write thereon at greater length some future day. "Romance and Arabella," by William Hurlbut—a taking idea, that of a female Anatol, spoiled by an utter lack of imagination and an amateurish treatment.

Music shows. "Doing Our Bit," one of the best entertainments the Winter Garden has revealed. "Jack o' Lantern"—that most dexterous of pantaloons, Mr. Fred Stone, at his most dexterous. "The Riviera Girl"—expensive scenery, some moderately good tunes (by Kalmann), and a leaden libretto. "Furs and Frills"—seedy stuff.

CRITICS WILD AND TAME

By H. L. Mencken

I

THE curse of criticism in America, and of literature with it, is the infernal babbling of the third-rate college professor, which is to say, of the overgrown sophomore. I am not one, of course, to deny the usefulness of the learned Ph. D. in the palace of beautiful letters, or, at all events, in the ante-chambers thereof. He, too, is one of God's creatures, and he has his high utilities. It is his business, *imprimis*, to ground unwilling school-boys in the rudiments of knowledge and taste, that they may comprehend the superiority of Ralph Waldo Emerson to Old Cap Collier, and know wherein the poems of Crabbe transcend "Only a Boy." It is his business, *secondamente*, to do the shovel and broom work of literary exploration—to count up the weak and strong endings in "Paradise Lost," to guess at the meaning of the typographical errors in Shakespeare, to bowdlerize Hannah More for sucklings, to establish the date of "Tamburlaine," to prove that Edgar Allan Poe was a teetotaler and a Presbyterian, to list all the differences between F_1 and F_2, to edit high-school editions of "Tales of a Traveler," "Die Jungfrau von Orleans" and "La Mort de Pompée." But it is *not* his business to sit in judgment upon the literature that is in being, for that job requires, above all things, an eager intellectual curiosity, a quick hospitality to ideas, a delight in novelty and heresy—and these are the very qualities which, if he had them, would get a professor cashiered in ten days. He is hired by the God-fearing and excessively solvent old gentlemen who sit on college boards, not to go scouting for what is new in the world, but to concentrate his mind upon the defense of what is old and safe. It is not his job to inflame his pupils to the pursuit and testing of ideas, but to make them accept docilely the ideas that have been approved as harmless, and his security and eminence in the academic grove run in direct proportion to his fidelity to that programme. If you want to know what happens to a professor who departs from it in the field of social theory, examine the life, crimes, trial, condemnation and execution of the late Scott Nearing, B.S., B.O., Ph.D. And if you want to measure the extent of the pressure in the field of the arts, think of what would have happened to a Princeton instructor who pronounced Walt Whitman a great artist in 1867.

It is the curse of American criticism, as I have hinted, that our rev. professors do not stick to their last—that they are forever poaching upon the preserve of criticism proper, and that a large body of public opinion follows them in their gyrations there. Fool that I am, I once welcomed that extension of function, and even mistook it idiotically for a proof that the professors were growing intelligent. I now know better, and recant without reservation. This roving of the birchmen has been, almost invariably, a damage and a nuisance. It has set up and fortified the formulae of the college pump in the precise field where all formulae are most dubious and most dangerous. It has created a caste of class-room big-wigs whose ponderous stupidity and mania for senseless labelling have corrupted the taste of two-

thirds of our people. And it has worked steadily, maliciously and lamentably against the recognition of every new writer who has had anything sound and original to contribute to the national letters, from Poe to Whitman, from Whitman to Mark Twain, and from Mark Twain to Dreiser, George Ade and Montague Glass, and in favor of every platitudinizing old woman who has offered tripe in the market-place, from John Greenleaf Whittier to George E. Woodberry, the New England spinsters and Henry Van Dyke.

If this reign of mush-heads went unchallenged it would bring complete disaster; we would have no literature at all, but only a manufacture of books. Fortunately, it is not. Challengers arises on all sides, or at least on a side or two, emitting red fireworks from their nostrils. Watchmen cry *"Halt! Wer da?"* Better still, seductive barkers invite to livelier and better shows. And none more eloquently, none with greater caress and plausibility, than James Huneker. Who shall ever estimate the value of this Huneker to the arts in America? Who shall figure out what the pedagogues might have done for us had he never broken into their solemn vespers? He has been, for nearly thirty years, the chief of all our aesthetic explorers. He has been our introducer of intellectual ambassadors. He has ranged, at home and abroad, the free field of ideas, and brought back all he could find that was valid, and stimulating, and significant. And always, to the lugubrious branding and ticketing of one school of professors and the puerile moralizing of the other, he has opposed the fluent and resilient criteria of a genuine culture, and the spacious tolerance of a civilized man.

Such a critic, it seems to me, is a definite national possession, a mammal to be valued. He is worth, not only a whole herd of Harvard poets and essayists, but the whole of Harvard. It is not that he has played fugleman to this or that exotic revolutionist, or held out a hand to this or that neophyte of the soil; it is that he has taken away from aesthetic experience its smack of schoolmastering and "improvement" and turned it into a kindling and even gay adventure. Time and again I go to his books to get rid of my cobwebs —particularly after arising from such a terrible piece of punditry as the "Standards" of W. C. Brownell. There, indeed, is eternal recuperation for the reader and reviewer—a Pierian spring that not only flows, but bubbles. There the thing is made joyous, and hence once more engrossing and important. It is just this faculty which sets off Huneker from all the rest: he can, without apparent effort, achieve that magic re-creation for which the learned Dr. Spingarn, echoing Goethe, Carlyle and Benedetto Croce, so pathetically bawls. He is himself an artist, and so he is at home among artists, and is able to understand what they are trying to do, and to sympathize with them in their pains and hesitations, and to make them interesting to the rest of us.

The last volume of the Hunekeran canon, by name, "Unicorns" (*Scribner*), lacks the sound articulation of most of its forerunners. It is, in fact, largely a product of the scissors, and some of its contents go back ten or twelve years. But though there is thus no steady stream of elucidation in it, and it shows nothing of novelty and discovery, it is, nevertheless, a book drenched with Huneker, and hence a book that slips past the eye very agreeably. Frankly a round-up, its contents are vastly discreet—a rhapsody on Brahms, foot-notes on George Sand, Henry James and Cézanne, an old valuation of Edward MacDowell, tentative reflections on James Joyce and Artzibashef, discourses on the great American novel and on English prose style, estimates of fiddlers and piano-players, experiments in fiction, philosophical memoranda—in brief, a stew, indeed, but always savory, always with its touches. Any critic in long practice could throw together such a book in a week, or, for that matter, half a dozen of them—but they would not be Huneker books; they would lack the salt that

is in this one. Moreover, its patchiness and casualness suggest a diligent engagement upon some more elaborate business. What it may be I don't know, but if I had a vote I should cast it for another volume of "Old Fogy." Schoenberg, Richard Strauss, Strawinsky, Debussy, Massenet, Puccini—surely they invite the assault of the fabulous Hungarian! "Old Fogy," indeed, is Huneker sublimated, the astral body set free from the dogged arthritis of reality, the Hunekeran juices twice distilled. *Tempus fugit!* On some not distant tomorrow I shall be in hell. I pray this boon before the blast catches me. . . .

II

Of the true school of Huneker, though differing from him at every pore, are Alexander Harvey and my virtuous *Corpsbruder,* George Jean Nathan. The formula of Nathan, as I have explained in this place in the past, is artless to the point of austerity: he simply tells the truth. That truth, on the one hand, finds the gizzard of the commercial manager who turns the theatre into a mere bull-ring and bawdy house, and, on the other hand, it shakes up the ego of the clownish Drama Leaguer. The result is a double prosperity for the legend of Nathan's iconoclasm, ribaldry and barbarism, for both factions find their only refuge from his devastating demonstrations in furious abuse. Here, alas, they get into fresh trouble, for when it comes to abuse, Nathan is a professor of the art. Is he called names? Then he calls names himself—but with the addition of a poisonous wit that no mere Barnum or Ibsenite can ever hope to bring to the business. Thus Broadway has its show, and the glory of God is humbly served.

The latest Nathan issue, "Mr. George Jean Nathan Presents" (*Knopf*), exposes his method very admirably. It is, superficially, a book of rocking mirth, a compendium of flouting and derision. It is, fundamentally, a book of sharp and accurate judgments, presenting a sound theory of the theater. And what is that theory? It is, in brief, that works of art are not to be estimated by classifying them and labeling them, but by examining each of them for itself—by looking into its essential form and organization, considering the intent behind it, and valuing it according to its interest and validity to a civilized spectator. This bars out, at one stroke, the play of empty sentimentality. It bars out the tin-pot melodrama. It bars out the moony mush of the jitney Ibsens and Maeterlincks. It bars out the mere circus, sensation and peep-show. But it lets in every play, however conceived or designed, that contains an intelligible idea and is competently worked out. It lets in every play by a dramatist who is a serious artist, and self-respecting, and able to think and to write.

Bear this theory in mind, and you have a clear explanation of Nathan's actual performances—first, his merciless lampooning of the trade-goods of Broadway and the solemn pifflings of the Drama League geniuses, and secondly, his ardent championing of such widely diverse men as Avery Hopwood, Florenz Ziegfeld, Ludwig Thoma, Lord Dunsany, George Bernard Shaw, Ferenz Molnar, Roberto Bracco and Gerhart Hauptmann, all of whom have one thing in common: they are intelligent and ingenious, and know their trade. In Europe there are many more such men than in America, and some of the least of them are almost as good as our best. That is why Nathan is forever announcing them and advocating the presentation of their works—not because he favors foreignness for its own sake, but because it is so often accompanied by sound achievement and by stimulating example to our own artists. And that is why, when he tackles the maudlin flubdub of the ex-bartenders and jejune college boys who pass as geniuses on Broadway, he does it with the slapstick and seltzer siphon of comedy. What would you? Is an educated man to waste serious argument upon a piece of

balderdash by George Broadhurst, a nonsensical cream-puff by Belasco, a smutty leg-show disguised as a Biblical drama? Nay. The remedy for such offenses against decent taste is a blow with a bladder, and that is exactly the remedy that Nathan applies.

Necessarily, he has to lay on with frequency. For one honest play, honestly produced and honestly played, that gets to Broadway there are two dozen displays of bosh. So his criticism consists largely of ridicule, of comic exposure, of the *reductio ad absurdum*. But when the stray exception appears, when something sound and respectable appears, whatever its form or investiture, then he is prompter than any of them to blow the horn. I look back over a dozen theatrical seasons, and catch him in very few errors, either of commission or of omission. He has not missed many worthy things, patent or obscure. His eye has rolled ceaselessly, and it has made discoveries. There is no intelligent dramatist or honest manager or competent actor in America who has not got help from him, freely and constantly. And there is no noisy mountebank in the theatre, however successful in tweaking the noses of the boobs, who can't show the marks of his snickersnee.

Harvey is a critic in less active practice: it is a pity that he writes so little. His "William Dean Howells" (*Huebsch*) is the most readable and original piece of literary criticism that America has seen since John Macy's "The Spirit of American Literature." In it there is the exact antithesis of the professorial manner. It is frank, courageous, provocative, exhilarating. It tells some plain truths in an admirably forthright way; it presents ideas that, whether true or false, at least intrigue the mind. The chief of them seems to me to be grossly false, to-wit, that Howells is a great novelist, and the peer of Balzac. Balzac was a trickster and showman; he wrote "Père Goriot," the worst novel in the world. But at his best he at least tried to get beneath the surface; he saw human life as more than a childish parlor game; he had his moments of awe and wonder. In Howells I can see nothing of the sort. He is dexterous and amusing; his facility is positively astonishing; but his novels, in the end, remain as empty as ancient skulls. He is the Moszkowski, the Chaminade, the Saint-Saëns of fiction. To compare him with the Beethovens and Bachs and Brahmses is sheer nonsense.

Harvey himself seems to be aware of this. He starts off with his impossible thesis—and then disproves it magnificently. In the first half of his book he is the patriot defending Howells against the competition of third-rate Englishmen and tenth-rate Continentals. In the second half, having scared off the foe, he proceeds to bring Howells himself to autopsy. The result, for all the preliminary fustian, is a penetrating and brilliant piece of criticism. The Howells limitations are mercilessly exposed; the feeble Howells matter is dredged up out of the deceptive Howells manner. . . . But Howells, after all, is not the real subject of the volume. It deals with literature in general, loosely and largely. It is full of the reflections and conclusions of a man who not only knows books, but also loves him—in brief, of a man of sense and taste, and not of a snuffling pedagogue. It is unhackneyed, personal and delightful. I am sure you will like it.

III

THE other critical works of the month interest me a good deal less. Louis V. Ledoux's "George Edward Woodberry" (*Poetry Review*) is a solemn discourse upon a campus poet whose chief peculiarity seems to be that he has never written any poetry. "The Journal of Leo Tolstoi, 1895-1899" (*Knopf*) I can't read: the secret maunderings of the old jackass do not arrest me. As for "A Son of the Middle Border," by Hamlin Garland (*Macmillan*), it is the autobiography of a man who spoiled a possibly

useful life by going in for literature. Garland should have stuck to the Chautauqua, his first love. In the world of beauty he is as forlorn a stranger as a Methodist deacon at a *Kommers*.

Henry H. Finck's "Richard Strauss" (*Little-Brown*) exhibits another misfit, which is to say, Finck himself. The man cannot think clearly, he cannot write decently, and he seems to have a very defective knowledge of music. His book, setting aside the innumerable newspaper clippings that he has borrowed from scrap-books and newspaper morgues, is an impertinent, often ignorant and always ridiculous slanging of a man who stands indisputably at the head of all living musicians, and has done work that deserves the profound respect of everyone with ears. Every preposterous piece of malicious Strauss gossip is dished up; everything that can be said against every Strauss composition is duly said; the impression that the uninformed reader must inevitably get, plowing through this morass of *Town Topics* and *Kaffeeklatsch* criticism, is that the composer of "Der Rosenkavalier" and "Tod und Verklärung" is a cheap charlatan. And not only Strauss is manhandled, but also Brahms and others, and with them music itself. I direct your attention, for example, to the astounding twaddle about the sonata form on pages 92 to 95, with its staggering doctrine that the four movements are "totally unrelated in subject" and that the whole has no intrinsic design or psychological basis. And to the various sneers at Brahms, particularly the one on page 148. "If the genius of a composer is to be rated by his slow movements . . . then Brahms also falls short." Think of the Fourth Symphony!

The one rational and judicious thing in the whole volume is a preface by Percy Grainger, himself a competent musician. What he says is in striking contrast to the chatter of Finck, for he not only knows Strauss thoroughly and can comprehend his aims; he is also able to put his conclusions into coherent English. His little essay, in fact, is a model of modest and yet well-maintained criticism; he has reasons for his doctrines and he states them engagingly. To me, at least, it seems that he under-estimates Strauss's skill at instrumentation—surely there are long passages in "Josefs Legende," "Der Rosenkavalier," "Elektra," and, above all, "Feuersnot," that are far more than "momentary inspirations"—but that is a matter in which Grainger's opinion is surely of much greater worth than a layman's.

IV

In the midst of the customary tosh and blather, various novels of laudable quality are to be found currently in the department stores—among them, "The Three Black Pennys," by Joseph Hergesheimer (*Knopf*); "The Cream of the Jest," by James Branch Cabell (*McBride*); "Marching Men," by Sherwood Anderson (*Lane*), and "A Chaste Man," by Louis Wilkinson (*Knopf*). Moreover, there is a new and better edition of "Sister Carrie," by Theodore Dreiser (*Boni-Liveright*)—in fact, the only good one so far, for that of Doubleday, Page & Co. was little more than a set of rough sheets glued together, that of Dodge was made hideous by a preposterous frontispiece, and that of the Harpers was bound in a figured cloth apparently designed for Mother Hubbards.

Hergesheimer, in his new book, attempts to show the painful and laborious reaction of character to environment, not in a single individual or a group of diverse individuals, but in three successive members of the same family. The constant element in the process is a peculiar romantic daring, a sort of Byronic talent for the baroque and the naughty, which flares up at intervals in the house of Penny. The shift of environment is from the mellowing barbarism of colonial Pennsylvania to the decadent artificiality of the Philadelphia of today, that most hoggish and hypocritical of all American towns. The first Penny, in the early eighteenth century, achieves an exogamous marriage via Route No. 7. The second, in

the early nineteenth, saddles himself with an intolerable affair of the morganatic order. The third, in our own time, wobbles between amorous futilities and æsthetic sentimentalities until death finally extinguishes him, and the Penny line with him. The last showing of the flame is in a woman, a Penny by the left hand. The exhibition begins with violent thrusts of fire; it ends in sputterings and dancing shadows.

The book suggests Galsworthy's "The Dark Flower," both in its plan and in its manner, but unlike that fine piece it is by no means a mere demonstration in sex. We hear far more about the three Pennys than their adventures in the Bunsen burner of passion. They are revolved as the thing goes on; we see them from different sides and in different lights; each character sketch is elaborately and capitally done. And the three are deftly hung together: the Pennyism of these Pennys, so to speak, has reality, despite its gradual petering out. As for the writing, it shows a degree of finish very rare in the American novel—a finish never forgotten for an instant and sometimes rising to hardness, but always appropriate to the business, and the mirror of fine skill, and charming for its own sake. This Hergesheimer, in truth, is pre-eminently a fine workman, a man who respects his materials and his craft, a novelist of sound culture. He doesn't write emotionally, evangelistically, gaudily; he writes like a gentleman. And here he has done a piece of work that ends his apprenticeship, and puts him in a secure and honorable position.

The Cabell book is another quite unusual composition, half novel and half essay in psychology, and with excellent writing in it from cover to cover. In ground plan it is an attempt to lay bare the secret soul of Felix Kennaston, a successful novelist—not the Bovaryan pseudo-soul visible to his wife and his neighbors, but that esoteric spirit which transcends time and space, and has its adventures in the super-world of the imagination. Outwardly, Kennaston is a discreet and reputable man—a convinced monogamist, a dutiful householder, a docile Presbyterian. But within him there dwells an adventurer who ranges the whole of the visible universe, and a lover who has found his heart's desire. So much for the framework of the story. Upon it Mr. Cabell hangs the loot of much intellectual marauding—brilliant bits of irony, penetrating reflections upon faiths and ideas, a whole agnostic philosophy. It would be difficult to match the book in American fiction; it has, from first to last, a French smack; one constantly hears overtones that suggest Anatole France and J. K. Huysmans. A thing obviously written *con amore*, joyously, without regard to markets. The reader it will attract is precisely the reader most worth attracting. It is not a popular novel, not a story, not a mere time-killer; it is a piece of literature.

Anderson's "Marching Men" starts off brilliantly, but toward the end he begins to load it with dubious sociological ideas, as he loaded "Windy McPherson's Son," and so it loses some of its early vitality. In brief, it is the history of Norman McGregor, a youth from the Pennsylvania mining region who goes to Chicago, studies law, sets up shop as a prophet, and organizes the floating workers out there into regiments of industrial soldiers. The idea is that of Kipling's McAndrews: "Law, Order, Duty an' Restraint, Obedience, Discipline!" Above all, discipline. The regular tramp, tramp, tramp of rank after rank, the subtle strength of the drilled man, the mob made one and irresistible. Thus the plan. But the end, the aim? Here, alas, McGregor is less explicit, and with him his creator. I put down the book with the wish that Mr. Anderson had not brought the prophet out of Coal Creek. There he is brilliantly projected against a background as real as the landscape you see out of your window. There, and not in the last chapters, is the proof that Mr. Anderson is a novelist with something to say. . . . The Wilkinson book belongs to a

far different genus. It is, like "The Buffoon," an experiment in irony, and capitally done. Not a word of moralizing is in it, and yet how delightfully the immoral moral is rubbed in! I commend it to your search when your mood is for an antidote to the stodgy thickness and solemnity of current fiction. It is a *scherzo* with some fine, sonorous chords underneath.

The rest of the novels interest me very little. There are three well-devised short stories in "The Friends," by Stacy Aumonier (*Century*), but they suffer from repetition of ideas. In such confections as "Turn About Eleanor," by Ethel M. Kelley (*Bobbs-Merrill*); "The Indian Drum," by William MacHarg and Edwin Balmer (Little-Brown); "Temperamental Henry," by Samuel Merwin (*Bobbs-Merrill*); "Amarilly in Love," by Belle K. Maniates (*Little-Brown*); "Wings of the Cardinal," by Bertha Crowell (Doran); "Scandal," by Cosmo Hamilton (*Little-Brown*); "White Monarch and the Gas-House Pup," by R. G. Kirk (*Little-Brown*); "Bucking the Tiger," by Achmed Abdullah (*Shores*), and "Long Live the King," by Mary Roberts Rinehart (*Houghton*), I can find only the commonplace stuff of department-store fiction. If you crave detailed reviews of that sort of thing subscribe to the New York *Times*.

"Bromley Neighborhood," by Alice Brown (*Macmillan*), is rather hard going, and "The Dwelling Place of Light," by Winston Churchill (*Macmillan*), I can't read at all, but here a personal prejudice against certain varieties of fiction may be showing itself, and so I advise you to read them as in duty bound. "The Wanderers," by Mary Johnston (*Houghton*), exhausts me long before I finish it: it is a series of sketches, inordinately drawn out, showing the shifting position of woman through the ages. "The Unholy Three," by Tod Robbins (*Lane*) starts off brilliantly, but soon slides into conventionality and puerility. Nevertheless, it is a first novel of much more promise than usual—the work of a newcomer who shows plain signs of doing something notable, once he finds his legs. "Jap Herron," a novel written from the "Ouija board" (*Kennerley*), is simply an irritating imbecility. A long introduction by Emily Grant Hutchings asks us to believe that it was dictated to a medium by the ghost of Mark Twain. It is an intolerably childish piece of nonsense, and resembles the actual writing of Mark about as much as the average moving-picture actor resembles Socrates. I turn for relief to books frankly intended for children, especially to the excellent "Sandman's Tales" and "The Sandman's Hour," by Abbie Phillips Walker (*Harper*), and to "New Adventures of Alice," a continuation of "Alice in Wonderland," by John Rae (*Volland*). Christmas is on us. The young ones, I am sure, will delight in Mrs. Walker's ingenious stories.

Two volumes by eminent hands remain: "The Soul of a Bishop," by H. G. Wells (*Macmillan*), and "King Coal," by Upton Sinclair (*Macmillan*). The Wells tome offers an inept and ludicrous amalgam of his early pseudo-science and his latter-day pseudo-religion. It is one of the dullest, stupidest, most unconvincing compositions that these eyes have rolled through for many a day; to find its match one must go to the same author's "God the Invisible King." But even in "God the Invisible King" there is nothing to equal the idiotic dialect of Lady Sunderbund. Surely Wells is putting heavy strains upon his admirers. . . . "King Coal" is a picture of life in the Colorado mining region, and is full of meticulous and apparently very accurate detail. Its defect lies in the fact that its central character, a young millionaire who goes into the mines to help uplift the miners, is always a bit stagey and incredible. To me, at least, the facts which give the book consideration would have been far more appetizing as simple facts, without any varnish of fiction on them. But even so, the story goes down painlessly and is not without its moments. . . .

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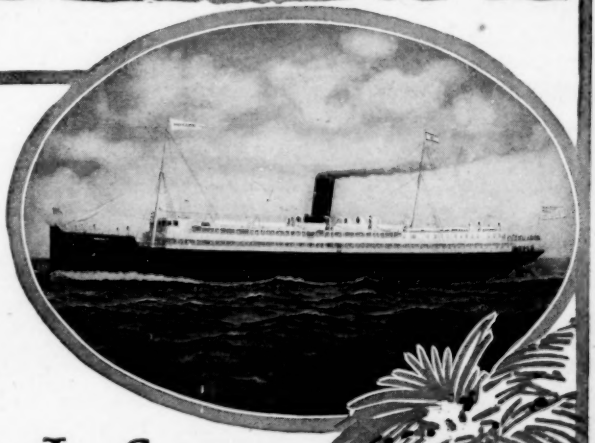

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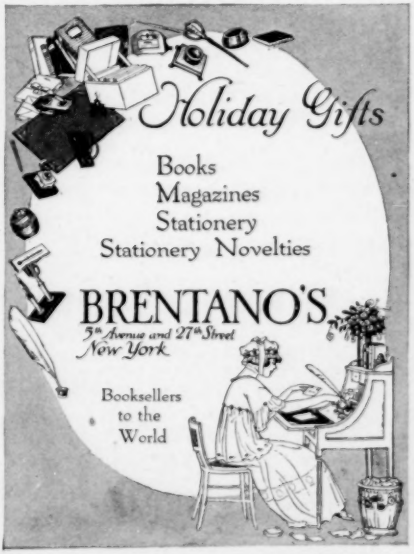
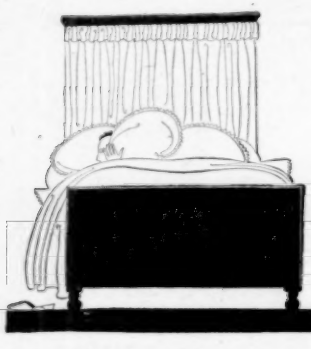


Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, Etc., Required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of Smart Set. Published monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1917. State of New York, County of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared E. F. Warner, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of The Smart Set, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Smart Set Company, Inc., 461 8th Ave., New York City; Editor, George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken, 461 Eighth Ave., New York City; Managing Editor, George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken, 461 Eighth Ave., New York City; Business Manager, E. F. Warner, 461 Eighth Ave., New York City. 2. That the owners are: Smart Set Company, Inc., 461 Eighth Ave., New York City; E. F. Warner, 461 Eighth Ave., New York City; George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken, 461 Eighth Ave., New York City; E. F. Crowe, 33 West 42d St., New York City. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: Col. W. D. Mann, 2 West 45th St., New York City; Mrs. E. Mann-Vyrme, 2 West 45th St., New York City; George Jean Nathan, H. L. Mencken, E. F. Warner, 461 Eighth Ave., New York City; E. F. Crowe, 33 West 42d St., New York City. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustee, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. (Signed) E. F. WARNER, Publisher. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 27th day of September, 1917. [Seal] A. W. Sutton. (My commission expires March 30, 1918.)



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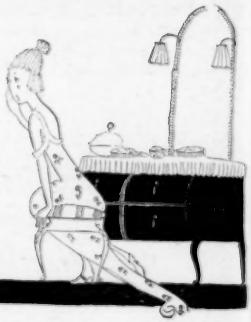

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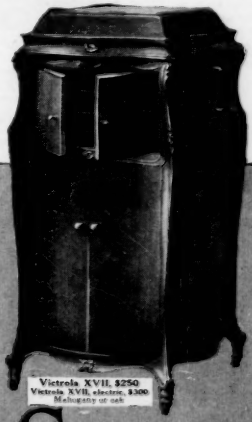
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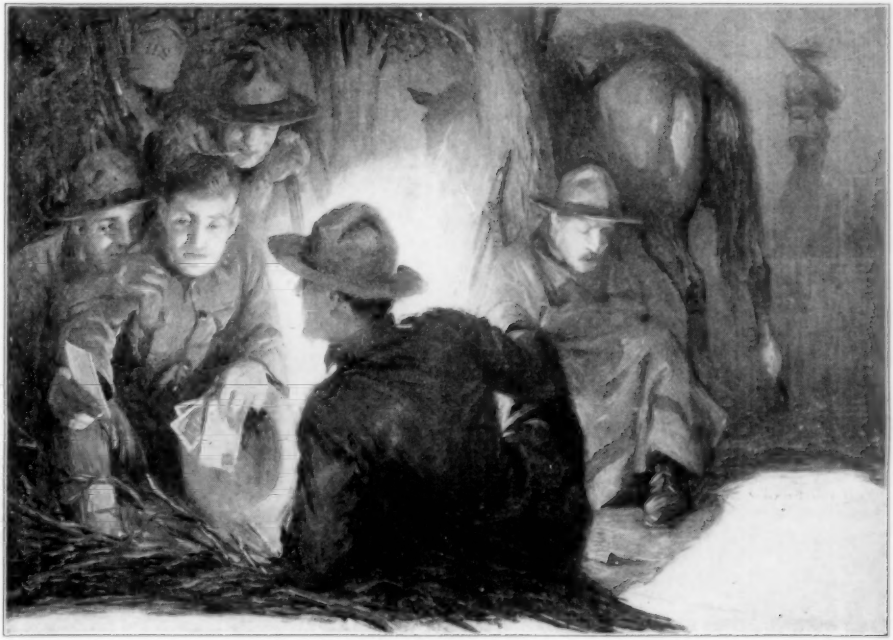

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